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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A MARRIAGE PREPARATION INSTRUMENT BASED ON SYMBOLIC INTERACTION THEORY

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND
RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled A MARRIAGE PREPARATION INSTRUMENT BASED ON SYMBOLIC INTERACTION THEORY submitted by Robert J.A. Dussault in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Family Studies.

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this thesis is to construct a marriage preparation instrument according to identified guidelines and to base the instrument on a conceptual model derived from Symbolic Interaction Theory.

Marriage preparation is identified as an applied program which attempts to help couples make the transition to marriage in a more functional manner. The position of marriage preparation within the broad field of Family Life Education is also discussed.

Three guidelines for the construction of a marriage preparation program or instrument are identified after a consideration of the social context and characteristics of the participants. Three other guidelines emerge from a discussion of the state of marriage preparation as reported in the current literature.

The fundamental guideline indicates a need to base marriage preparation programs on theoretical foundations so that program goals may be specified and objective evaluation may be conducted. Symbolic Interaction Theory is selected as an appropriate theoretical foundation and a conceptual model derived from this framework is described. The constructed instrument consists of six role taking/empathic exercises. The integration of these exercises with the conceptual model is discussed.

A partial and preliminary evaluation was conducted to assess the instrument's consistency with the requirements outlined by the identified guidelines. A research design for objective evaluation is described.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER I: GENERAL FOCUS OF THESIS 1

Objective of the Thesis 1

Marriage Preparation in the Context of Family Life-cycle Transitions 3

Marriage Preparation in the Context of Family Life Education 7

General Assumptions Underlying a Program of Marriage Preparation 15

CHAPTER II: SEARCH FOR GUIDELINES 18

Marriage Preparation Participants 19

Variation Among Participants 19

Element of Uniqueness 23

Context of Engagement 27

Current Situation of Marriage Preparation ... 33

Variety of Professionals and Program Formats 35

A Question of Basic Approach 40

The Absence of and the Need for Evaluative Research 44

Summary of Guidelines 48

CHAPTER III: CONSTRUCTION OF A MARRIAGE PREPARATION INSTRUMENT 51

Selection of a Theoretical Foundation 51

Symbolic Interaction Theory: An Applicable Framework 51

Symbolic Interaction and the Dyadic Relationship 52

Symbolic Interaction and Thesis Guidelines 52

Conceptual Model and Marriage Preparation Instrument 62

A Conceptual Model 62

Integration of Conceptual Model and Marriage Preparation Instrument 83

The Marriage Preparation Instrument 90

CHAPTER IV: EVALUATION 123

Participant Evaluation 123

Limitations of the Instrument 131

A Caution to Professionals 132

Professional Collaboration and Evaluation ... 133

Research Design for Objective Evaluation 134

Instrument of Measurement 136

Suggested Procedures for Obtaining a Sample 141

Summary Comments on Model - Instrument - Research 142

Additional Research Implication 143

BIBLIOGRAPHY 145

APPENDIX: COMMENT ON COMPULSORY MARRIAGE PREPARATION 156

CHAPTER I

GENERAL FOCUS OF THE THESIS

I. Objective of the Thesis

The objective of this thesis is to construct a marriage preparation instrument according to six specific guidelines. These guidelines will be identified in the second chapter of the thesis.

Three guidelines will be identified following an inquiry into the general characteristics and social context of engaged couples. These guidelines indicate that a marriage preparation instrument should be so constructed that it will:

1. be effective in reaching and helping couples of varied ages, backgrounds, and levels of maturity;
2. respect the uniqueness of the couple's relationship, place emphasis on the relationship in its current state of development, and involve the couple in working and communicating together to prepare themselves for their marriage;
3. allow the couple to confront the romantic aura and pre-occupation with wedding plans and also help the couple strengthen and enrich their relationship.

An examination of the current state of marriage preparation programs will produce the remaining three guidelines. These indicate that a marriage preparation instrument should be constructed so that it will:

4. be employable by all professionals, be capable of integration within any of the methods or program-formats presently in existence, and, at the same time, minimize as much as possible the dependency upon professional input and skills for preparation effectiveness;

5. be dynamic in approach and thereby provide the couple with an experiential learning experience;
6. be based on a conceptual model which specifies and limits goals and thereby allows for subsequent, objective evaluation.

The guidelines specify the aspects which must be considered during the construction and implementation of marriage preparation programs. An examination of the current status of marriage preparation reveals that these aspects are widely ignored.

The sixth guideline identifies the need to base a marriage preparation instrument on a conceptual model which specifies and limits goals and thereby allows for subsequent, objective evaluation. This is the fundamental guideline. A conceptual model will be described in the third chapter of the thesis, and the marriage preparation instrument will be constructed on the basis of this model.

A preliminary and partial evaluation of the instrument's consistency with the guidelines will be reported in the final chapter of the thesis. A research design for objective evaluation of the instrument will also be outlined.

Before identifying the reasons for each of the guidelines, it is necessary to discuss three relevant issues. The first issue involves the relationship of marriage preparation to family life-cycle transitions. This discussion will specify the basic motivation for marriage preparation efforts. Secondly, a discussion of marriage preparation in relation to the broad field of family life education will clarify the term "marriage preparation" and provide a working definition for this thesis. Finally, a treatment of the general assumptions underlying marriage preparation efforts will provide rationale for the specification of guidelines.

II. Marriage Preparation in the Context of Family Life-cycle Transitions

The emergence of the developmental framework as a major conceptual tool in the area of family studies and family research has focused attention on the various life-cycle stages of individual and family careers. More importantly, the framework's ability to incorporate the notions of processual time (Rodgers, 1973) and, therefore, developing careers, has highlighted the transitional aspects involved in the passage from one life-cycle stage to another (Troll, 1971). These transitional processes in the family career have been the object of considerable research in recent years, and a review of this research literature reveals a certain consistency both among the findings reported and the implications or conclusions drawn.

With regard to the findings, researchers indicate that life-cycle transitions entail change in role expectations, attitudes, values, goals, and responsibilities (Spence and Lonner, 1971) and are often marked by an experience of strain and uncertainty (LeMasters, 1968; Berardo, 1968, 1970; Spence and Lonner, 1971). The very interdependence of the family members' careers, coupled with the aspects of change inherent in these transitions, harbour the potentiality for conflict (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1967) as the individuals attempt to adjust to the novel demands and obligations.

Similarly, the articles consulted in this review consistently reported little or no socio-cultural preparation for the demands and adjustments necessitated by the life-cycle transitions (Hill and Waller, 1951; Rossi, 1969). One study indicated that the amount of strain and conflict present in making the "empty nest" transition seemed to be inversely related to the amount of anticipatory preparation which the family had experienced (Spence and Lonner, 1971).

Apart from noting the absence of socio-cultural preparation, these research endeavors are likewise characterized by a conclusion calling for adequate, formal preparation for family members prior to a transition in their family career(s). This suggestion is offered whether the transition involved is marriage itself (Rapoport, 1970; Rapoport and Rapoport, 1967), first parenthood (LeMasters, 1968; Rossi, 1969), the "empty nest" (Spence and Lonner, 1971), widowhood (Berardo, 1968, 1970) or retirement (Schonfield, 1970). The assumption underlying this suggestion is that such prior preparation will facilitate the change and thereby lessen the amount of strain experienced.

When viewed within the context of the transitional schema of the life-cycle (Rodgers, 1973), marriage preparation appears as a formalized attempt to help individuals cope with the demands of one transitional stage, namely, the transition to marriage. Although dealing specifically with the transition to widowhood, Berardo's (1968: 201) observation would seem to apply equally or, perhaps, more forcefully, to the transition to marriage itself:

> "Sociologists have long known that few events in the life cycle require more extensive changes in activities, responsibilities, and living habits (or cause greater alterations in attitudes, reranking of values, and alterations of outlook on life) than does a change from one marital status to another."

While all life-cycle transitions involve certain developmental tasks which the individual(s) must incorporate in order to achieve integration and equilibrium in the new altered social system (Rodgers, 1973: 51), the critical nature of the transition to marriage seems to center not so much on the tasks themselves as on the patterns of "coping" with the tasks which a newly married couple develop during the first months of their relationship (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1967: 346-347). The shape and direction of the marital relationship emerges quite early as "in the first six or twelve months a couple develops habits of behaving toward one another that become settled and are not easily altered later" (Mace, 1972: 25).

If the assumption is correct that most couples enter marriage with a life-long relationship in mind, a failure on the part of husband and wife to establish adequate patterns of coping with the developmental tasks early in marriage, or conversely, the development of destructive or unsatisfactory patterns during this same initial stage, may lead to the crystalization of behavioral and interactional habits (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1967: 344) which sow the seeds of later conflict (Mace, 1972: 25). This occurrence will also make it difficult to incorporate later developmental tasks (Rodgers, 1973: 51). The transition to marriage assumes added importance because the patterns of interaction and habits of behavior established during this transition process will most likely endure and become influential when subsequent, life-cycle transitions are encountered. As the Rapoport's observe:

> "...while marriage differs for different couples according to their premarital relationships and the sort of early marriage they envisage, it is a transition point which must be reckoned with. It is an event that has associated with it specific tasks defined partly by their culture, partly by themselves. The ways in which couples work through and accomplish these tasks hypothetically affect the subsequent stable state of affairs in the social systems of the family and in the personalities of the interacting individuals." (1967: 342)

While the Rapoport's are primarily concerned with the effect of interaction during the honeymoon period upon subsequent marital patterning, other writers view the entire premarital period as influential in determining how a couple will make the transition to marriage (Bolton, 1968; Mace, 1972; Otto, 1965). The literature dealing with the transition to marriage presents a unified picture of a situation that is rich both in potentialities for growth and potentialities for disturbance and conflict. Because of this family scholars and practitioners urge formal preparation for the transition to marriage so that a couple can develop positive patterns of interaction (Mace, 1972: 42) which will facilitate the successful accomplishment of the developmental tasks which the marriage transition involves. Such formal preparation is seen as instrumental in helping couples avoid unnecessary conflict and learn conflict-management techniques for the inevitable problems which arise in marital relationships (Sprey, 1969: 705). While writers express different reasons for initiating preparation before marriage, many place at least some emphasis on the preventative possibilities of such intervention. Herbert Otto's (1965: 258) position is representative of the latter view: "...if about-to-be married men and women can be helped to express, explore, and clarify their attitudes, feelings, desires and expectations, many misunderstandings and conflicts can be avoided later on".

The developmental framework utilized in studying the family has focused attention upon the transitional demands involved in passing from one life-cycle stage to another. Anticipatory preparation, whether informal or formal, is seen as beneficial in that it helps those involved to define and accomplish the tasks associated with transition. Marriage preparation is a practical response to the expressed need for formal preparation prior to the transition to marriage.

III. Marriage Preparation in the Context of Family Life Education

Before describing the place of marriage preparation among the varied programs of family life education, it will first be necessary to clarify just what marriage preparation involves. This process of conceptual clarification is necessary because the indiscriminate use of the term "marriage preparation" among family life educators gives rise to a need for definition of a more exact and limiting nature.

It has been correctly observed that the total, preceding life experiences of an individual are prepatory for marriage (Otto, 1965: 258). This being the case, family life educators are prone to label any educational course or program dealing with family and marriage as "marriage preparation". To some extent, this blanket use of the term is correct, but it is necessary, especially for the purpose of this thesis, to make a distinction between what might be called "marriage education" and "marriage preparation". Such a distinction will limit the meaning of marriage preparation and clarify the usage of the term in this thesis.

Marriage education refers to courses, programs, seminars, etc., which deal directly (some add, indirectly) with marriage and family life. For example, a high school course on marriage, an academic or functional marriage course at the university level, and a program of sex education can be called marriage education. Basically, these programs and courses involve education about marriage in any or all of its aspects and therefore provide what might be termed remote preparation for marriage: remote in the sense that the participants usually do not have immediate plans for marriage. Since it is remote, marriage education is usually focused on the needs of individuals rather than of socially identifiable couples and thus deals with marriage more as an objective, social phenomenon than as an impending, personal relationship. This is not to say that marriage education does not consider marriage as a relationship. In fact, some courses, especially functional marriage courses, are geared specifically to the development of attitudes and behavioral skills which help students function adequately and successfully in a marital relationship (Scoresby, 1974: 343). At the same time, however, such education is about relationships in general rather than about a particular relationship.

Another aspect generally characteristic of marriage education is that it is largely didactic in approach; that is, it consists primarily in education about marriage and family life. At the same time, however, considerable criticism has been leveled at didactic courses or programs because they are restricted to information giving (Mace, 1972: 9; Bowman, 1970: 117). This criticism and that of others (Scoresby, 1974) assert that marriage education should also foster the acquiring of basic skills and techniques necessary for marriage rather than just information about marriage.

Strictly speaking, marriage education becomes marriage preparation when it is proximate, couple-oriented, and formative. Although these terms are clearly inter-related in the present context, each serves to denote a particular, essential aspect of marriage preparation and will be discussed in turn.

The word "proximate", in distinction to "remote", indicates that the persons involved as participants are "engaged" or at least committed to an impending, marital relationship. Since this is so, marriage preparation is couple-oriented; that is, the participants are more correctly viewed as identifiable couples rather than as individuals. Implied here is the notion that to truly prepare for marriage, both partners must be involved. This in turn indicates the third characteristic of marriage preparation, namely, its formative aspect. While the formative aspect does not exclude information giving, it is more directly oriented toward a consideration of the uniqueness of the individuals involved and, more importantly, concentrates on the unique facets of the relationship which each participating couple has already formed. Marriage preparation is formative, then, in the sense that it recognizes the fact that each couple "forms" or builds a distinctively unique, marital relationship and that their preparation for marriage must be uniquely their own.

The formative characteristic touches the core of marriage preparation which is "to encourage and help the couple to make a careful evaluation of themselves, of each other, and of _their_ relationship" (Mace, 1972: 9-10). Such an approach helps the couple to develop their present relationship and thereby prepare, not just for marriage, but for their marriage.

To summarize: when a program is specifically organized to help an "engaged" couple (or couples) enrich their relationship and prepare for their life as a married couple, then this program, no matter what format is employed can be correctly labelled as marriage preparation. Such a distinction limits the application of the term "marriage preparation" and it is this refined definition which will be utilized throughout the remainder of this thesis.

With the above distinction in mind, it is now possible to indicate the position of marriage preparation within the broad spectrum of family life education. This will clarify the distinctive contribution of marriage preparation to the applied, educational field.

It is impossible to enter into a full discussion of the struggle for definitional clarification which has held the interest and concern of family life educators for some time (Somerville, 1971: 18-21). Nevertheless, it is helpful to have a working definition for the purpose of this paper. The following, adapted definition (Avery and Lee, 1964; Force, 1971: 185-186) is both inclusive of current definitional trends and adequate for the present task:

> Family Life Education is an educational-formational process consciously employed to assist individuals in achieving a wholesome life by imparting the knowledge, and developing the attitudes, capacities, and behaviors necessary for constructive functioning in present and future family roles.

It is obvious that family life education pertains to an individual's entire life cycle, and within this broad range of educational possibilities, marriage preparation occupies a pivotal position because it deals specifically with individuals (couples) making the transition from family of origin to family of procreation. Marriage preparation is an educational-formational process which includes consideration of the participants' previous family experiences and present, relational development in order to prepare them for constructive functioning in their soon-to-be-assumed marital roles.

Although the term "pivotal" aptly describes the position of marriage preparation among applied programs, David Mace, speaking from forty years' experience, tends to allocate a "crucial" role to marriage preparation. Mace emphasizes the necessity of accentuating marriage and preventative strategy in family life education programs (1974: 193-194). Because he also asserts that interactional patterns become fairly well established within the first twelve months of a marital relationship (1972: 25), he sees marriage preparation as significant in helping couples develop functional and mutually satisfying interaction patterns in the first months of marriage. Otto likewise implies that marriage preparation plays a crucial role when he asserts that the pre-marital period is a time when "both partners are more open to the establishment of healthy patterns of marital interaction...than they are likely to be at any subsequent time in their married life" (1965: 258).

Both Mace and Otto promote the development of healthy marriages. For Mace, a healthy marriage is one involving a creative relationship which enhances the personal growth of each partner and fosters mutual satisfaction (1974: 193-194). The position of this thesis is in accord with Mace's contention that marriage preparation can be crucial in helping couples establish a healthy marital relationship.

Taking the position that marriage preparation is pivotal in family life education and crucial in the life of a couple, raises the logical question as to why efforts in this area are so sporadic or entirely lacking among many professionals (Rutledge, 1968: 123). Numerous answers, each bearing some validity, can be found in the critical literature. Rutledge (1968:123) observes that marriage preparation, especially for clinicians, poses unusual stresses because of ill-defined approaches, therapies, and needs. Similarly, Mace (1974: 193) indicates that, until recently, family educators tended to sidestep the issue of marriage itself because of its personal and private nature. Mace (1972: 24) elsewhere observes that couples opt to enter marriage without formal preparation because of a serious and quite prevalent illusion; namely, "that no special knowledge is needed in order to live together as a married couple". To these more obvious answers may be added the ironic observation that the increase in marriage education at the high school and university levels may actually have obscured the distinctive role of marriage preparation in the minds of both professional people and young couples contemplating marriage.

Whatever the reasons, there now appears to be a growing awareness among family educators (Mace, 1972, 1974), family clinicians (Rutledge, 1966; Otto, 1965), and professionals in other related fields (Evely, 1968: 123) of the significiant contribution which marriage preparation makes toward the promotion of healthy marital and family life. To some extent, this awareness has emerged from the recognition of the changing marital and family patterns in contemporary society and the subsequent, new demands which these changes have placed upon married couples.

For example, Louis Evely asserts that the greatest danger facing those not yet married is that they will get married with the ideas and attitudes of their parents even though their marriage will not have the same meaning, the same purpose, and the same supports (1968: 123). Others view the radical changes which have taken place in our time as intimately related to the ailing state of marriage today and therefore promote wide revision in attitudes, expectations, and practice in order to help people cope with the new demands of modern marriage (Jackson and Lederer, 1968: 14-15). One crucial time during which these changes can be initiated is during the premarital period, and it is hoped, such premarital intervention will be significant in helping couples establish what might be called workable, healthy marriages.

From a theoretical point of view, then, marriage preparation can be visualized as a preparatory intervention which is prior to one of the life-cycle transitions. Practically speaking, such premarital intervention is viewed as crucial, or, at least pivotal among the many and varied programs created to promote healthy marriages and families. Both aspects -- the theoretical and the practical -- give some indication of the assumptions underlying any program of marriage preparation.

IV. General Assumptions Underlying a Program of Marriage Preparation

The goal of building healthy individuals, marriages, and families can be detected as the basic force directing family life education endeavors. Granted, specific programs have specific goals, but these more refined or limited objectives are usually accepted as specialized means of promoting the primary goal, namely, a healthy marriage or family.

Although it will be necessary to outline later the specific goal of the instrument to be designed in this thesis, it is important at this point to discuss the more general goals of marriage preparation and thereby indicate the basic assumptions of marriage preparation efforts.

In reference to marriage preparation, the assumption commonly underlying all programs is that "good" marriages are better than "bad" marriages. This is a simplistic way of stating the matter, but ultimately, it is the most uncomplicated way of expressing the basic assumption. The terms "good" and "bad", are admittedly quite vague and allow almost endless specification. Nevertheless, practitioners involved in marriage preparation do assume that a good marriage, however they define it, is conducive to the general welfare of individuals, family, and society. On the basis of this almost unquestioned assumption, efforts aimed at producing "good" marriages, or, conversely, preventing "bad" marriages, are deemed worthwhile.

In order to avoid the vagueness of the term "good" and to likewise skirt possible controversy over preferred "types" or styles of relationships, the notion of the "workable marriage" will be used in this paper. This concept is an integral part of every description (assumption) of the good marriage. Jackson and Lederer (1968: 56) define a workable marriage as a "functional union which can bring reasonable satisfaction and well-being to both partners". Again, such a definition permits extensive specification and refinement, but, for the present purpose, the notion of a workable marriage provides a basic, generally acceptable articulation of the fundamental assumption underlying marriage preparation endeavors, namely, that a workable marriage is beneficial to the partners and to society, and, because of this value, such marriages are to be promoted.

The second assumption founding marriage preparation is quite easily detected in the literature dealing with the subject. Although it may never be completely verbalized (e.g. McDonald and Nett, 1973), this assumption is necessarily operative in every program. This assumption asserts that marriage preparation itself is beneficial and effective in helping couples to achieve a good or workable marriage. This assumption resides at the very core of marriage preparation efforts as it provides the motivating force or rationale for the existence of such preparatory efforts in the first place.

The assumption that formal intervention during the premarital period will have positive affect upon the marital relationship encourages family life practitioners to become involved in formal programs of marriage preparation. Nevertheless, it is the position of this thesis that the unquestioned acceptance of this assumption has served in part to delay much needed evaluation of marriage preparation programs both on the practical level and on the scientific level. The blanket assumption that premarital intervention promotes workable marriages has led to the development of many and varied programs the effectiveness of which remains in question. Some recent research has challenged this basic assumption. Guldner (1971) questions the effectiveness of premarital intervention itself. McDonald and Nett (1973) suggest that some types of intervention are more effective than others. Both of these research efforts challenge the validity of the assumption underlying premarital intervention and thereby accentuate a need for the formulation of specific guidelines and especially for consequent testing and evaluation in regard to marriage preparation programs.

CHAPTER II

SEARCH FOR GUIDELINES

Marriage preparation has been earlier defined as a pivotal part of family life education. While this definition clarifies and limits the application of the term "marriage preparation" within the broad field of family life education, in and of itself, it contributes very little in directing the construction of an actual program of marriage preparation.

The definition does specify the participants involved and likewise give some indication of the relevant desciptive and research literature. Both of these elements -- the participants involved and the relevant literature -- provide indicators of the aspects to be considered and directions to be taken in the practical construction and implementation of a program. Consideration of the "nature" of the participants as well as of the current status of marriage preparation will produce guidelines for the creation of the marriage preparation instrument. At the present time, the literature pertaining to marriage preparation is almost entirely descriptive in nature, and, therefore, the search for guidelines will rely heavily on the descriptive element as well as upon insight into what might be termed "missing essentials": that is, those factors which are important but which have been ignored both in the literature and in the implementation of actual programs.

I. Marriage Preparation Participants

Consideration of those who do or could participate in marriage preparation reveals three factors which must be kept in mind when formulating a specific program. The first factor is the wide diversity of personal and background characteristics of the participants. Secondly, each participating couple is composed of two, unique individuals who have formed, and will continue to form, a unique relationship. And thirdly, by being engaged,[1.] these couples have assumed a socially defined status with pre-defined expectations. Each of these factors will be treated separately in order to clarify the guidelines which they imply for marriage preparation.

A. Variation Among Participants:

The participants in any given marriage preparation program may vary in their personal and background characteristics. The more important of these include:

1. Age
2. Level of maturity
3. Courtship history
    - length
    - intensity
    - quality
4. Family of origin

[1.] Not all couples become formally engaged. The term "engaged" is used in this thesis to include all couples who have made some commitment to marry or live together.

5. Socio-economic background
    - urban
    - rural
6. Religious background
7. Education

Although these variables may at first glance appear to be fairly obvious and matter-of-fact, any tendency to ignore the differing needs, responses, expectations, etc., which arise because of these variables will have deleterious results. Recognition of this fact is appearing in some of the literature and a brief treatment of the listed variables will help to accentuate this point.

There is a wide discrepancy in the ages of those couples who avail themselves of marriage preparation opportunities (McDonald and Nett, 1973:42). Within a given program for example, the ages of the participants may vary as much as twenty years. The extremes encountered in this writer's experience involved one couple in their mid-teens and another couple in their mid 30's. At the same time, any given couple may exhibit a wide discrepancy between the ages of the partners themselves.

In marriage preparation, one likewise encounters a great variety of levels of maturity in the participants, and this factor, perhaps more than mere age difference, must be taken into account when creating and/or conducting a program (McDonald and Nett, 1973: 46). Blanket assumptions on the part of program organizers about uniformity in maturity and, therefore, receptivity and readiness, among participants may lead to faulty program construction and, perhaps, some hasty conclusions. For example, Guldner (1971: 115) reports that many clergymen involved in premarital work questioned the readiness of couples to really hear and utilize the sessions to evaluate and explore their relationship. From his own survey of couples who had participated in marriage preparation with various ministers, Guldner concludes that "perhaps it could be said that most couples are too 'starry eyed' to be very objective about evaluating their own feelings and the dynamics of the relationship as it exists and as it might be in the future" (1971: 115). This conclusion led Guldner to propose an alternative to premarital preparation, namely, post-marital enrichment. Guldner's alternative program certainly has merit, but the general assumption regarding participant readiness for premarital preparation seems to have led to a premature rejection of premarital intervention. It is this writer's experience that some couples are indeed "starry eyed" or quite immature in their approach to marriage, but, at the same time, it is more correct to view couples as spread out on a continuum of receptivity and seriousness concerning the transition which they are about to make rather than to operate from an assumption which places them all at the same level.

Couples who participate in marriage preparation have courtships which vary in length of time, in intensity and in quality. Each couple is together for different reasons, each has established a certain level of openness, trust, and sharing, and as Bolton (1968: 43) indicates, each couple's relationship has developed through the interaction of various "right turns" and processes which give the relationship its present characteristics and description. In a similar vein, Otto observes that couples come to preparation sessions for different reasons and with different needs. These reasons and needs flow from the present state of their relationship. Some couples arrive with few problems and with a desire to grow in their relationship. Others entertain moderate doubts about themselves and their future marriage while still others have severe doubts and are seriously questioning themselves as partners (1965: 258). These couples come to marriage preparation with differing needs and expectations, and this variation is a factor requiring consideration if the needs are going to be met as completely as possible.

Other factors must also be considered. Premarital couples come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, from urban settings and from rural settings. They come with different religious formations and have completed varying levels of educational achievement. Again, ignoring these variables or taking them for granted may have detrimental results. An example is appropriate. A program in Des Moines, Iowa, which utilized a series of lectures by "experts" had to finally be scrapped when the organizers realized that no one presentation could satisfy or reach a group the composition of which included high school students, college graduates, and professional people (McDonald and Nett, 1973: 42).

Obviously, the task of preparing couples for marriage is "an immensely complicated one", as McDonald and Nett observe (1973: 48). The guideline which emerges from the consideration of the variation among participants is: a marriage preparation program and/or instrument should be so constructed that it will be effective in reaching and helping people of varied ages, backgrounds, and levels of maturity.

B. Element of Uniqueness:

The preceding treatment of the variation among participants stressed the divergent characteristics to be found among premarital couples. It is necessary to pursue the matter of diversity beyond that produced by the general variables of age, maturity and background. Consideration must be given to the element of uniqueness in each person and in each interpersonal relationship.

Each person brings to marriage an entire history of remote preparation (Otto, 1965: 258) which actually involves his entire preceding life experiences. This history produces a unique person with a unique set of attitudes, values, expectations, motivations and behavior patterns.

Similarly, each couple has formed a relationship the uniqueness of which is derived, in part, from the unique history of each partner as well as from the unique, interactional history of the relationship itself (Bolton, 1968). The premarital couple is two unique individuals sharing a unique relationship.

Recognition of the element of uniqueness is seldom stated explicitly in the literature dealing with marriage preparation. Rather, it seems to be assumed or generally implied (McDonald and Nett, 1973; Mace, 1972; United States Catholic Conference, 1973) in most texts and programs. Perhaps the most explicit statement regarding the element of uniqueness is found in Aaron Rutledge's Pre-Marital Counseling (1966: 26) when he observes that "what comes from marriage is determined by what is brought to it, and continually invested in it, by two personalities, each with relatively fixed and yet changed sets of needs, values, and interests".

The importance of this element of uniqueness should be emphasized and explicitly stated in the context of program development. Recognition of this characteristic of the premarital couple, namely, the uniqueness of their relationship will help to identify important guidelines for program construction while failure to take it into account will lead to reduced effectiveness and to results which are opposite of those expected or anticipated.

The element of uniqueness indicates three basic guidelines for program construction. First, it indicates that marriage preparation should concentrate on the couple's present relationship rather than their future marital relationship. Premarital intervention must affect a couple "in a timely way in terms of 'where they are" (McDonald and Nett, 1973: 44). David Mace implies the same when he asserts that the knowledge derived from marriage preparation is not to be stored away for future use (i.e. after marriage) but rather to be utilized in developing and deepening the relationship as it is at the present moment (1972: 42). The United States Catholic Conference's report states this insight in the following fashion: "The couple must be approached as they live here and now and not merely then or when" (1973: 8).

Secondly, the uniqueness of each premarital relationship implies that the marital relationship will likewise be unique. "Marriage is not going to change the relationship that is already developing...but will only intensify it by enabling it to be more intimate, more continuous, and more demanding" (Mace, 1972: 42). Each couple prepares not just for marriage, but for their marriage, and this realization in turn demands that the couple involved in marriage preparation spend time together exploring their relationship (Mace, 1972: 9), communicating together (Hinkle and Moore, 1971: 153) about themselves, their relationship, their feelings and needs (McDonald and Nett, 1973: 42). The element of uniqueness strongly suggests the guideline that the emphasis and focus of a premarital preparation program ought to fall upon the relationship of each couple attending the program rather than upon relationship or marriage in general terms.

Thirdly, the two preceding guidelines further imply that marriage preparation is, to some extent, self-preparation. That is, each couple working together "where they are at" in their relationship utilize and "internalize" (United States Catholic Conference, 1973: 8) the relevant input aspects of the marriage preparation program in order to enrich their relationship and prepare themselves for married life together.

Failure to incorporate the guidelines suggested by the element of uniqueness may lead to quite negative results. McDonald and Nett (1973: 39-43) report a general lack of responsiveness and interest among couples participating in the Des Moines program until the emphasis was altered to the interpersonal involvement of the partners with each other. Similarly, Guldner's survey of couples who had participated in church-sponsored programs revealed that eleven of eighteen couples reported not remembering much of what was said because "the minister had talked on the value of love, marriage, sex, etc., and that they had done little sharing of their own feelings and experiences and ideas" (1971: 115). The structure of the church-sponsored programs did not respect the uniqueness of the couples' relationships, did not involve them in preparing together for their marriage, and, as a result, were largely ineffectual at least as far as the participants were concerned.

The element of uniqueness is widely assumed but requires explicit accentuation in program construction. From this emphasis comes a guideline which can be stated as follows: that a marriage preparation program and/or instrument be so constructed that it will respect the uniqueness of each couple's relationship, place emphasis on the relationship in its current state of development, and involve the couple in working and communicating together to prepare themselves for their marriage.

C. Context of Engagement:

The far-reaching social changes of this century have most certainly altered the expectations, attitudes, and behaviors associated with marriage (Jackson and Lederer, 1968: 23-38) and, as a result, the precise meaning of marriage for an individual or couple is often ill-defined. The pre-marital status of "being engaged" has been similarly affected and "the precise meaning of engagement is still quite unclear" (United States Catholic Conference, 1973: 1).

While the exact nature and meaning of engagement is unclear, several factors characterize most engagements, and an awareness of these is helpful in marriage preparation work.

First of all, engagement carries with it a certain romantic aura for most couples (United States Catholic Conference, 1973: 4; Jackson and Lederer, 1968: 46), and, whether this romantic element emerges from the nature of the relationship itself (Jackson and Lederer, 1968: 42-43) or from social expectations, it is a factor with which people involved in marriage preparation must deal. It is this romantic element to which Guldner (1971: 115-116) was referring when he characterized pre-marital couples as "not ready" to prepare seriously for their marriage.

Since romance is based largely on "unreality" or, at best, "minimum knowledge of the other person" (Jackson and Lederer, 1968: 54) it is useful to acknowledge its presence, confront it, and help couples work through the "unrealistic" expectations of their relationship. Jackson and Lederer (1968: 54-55) refer to romance as an "hypnotic, ecstatic condition", and, when a couple is captured in such a state, it is obviously going to be difficult for them to objectively explore and evaluate their feelings and the dynamics of their relationship. Nevertheless, the options available to the practitioner in marriage preparation work are to confront the romantic element, to ignore it, or, as Guldner seems to have done (1971) seek alternatives because of it. It is the position of this thesis that if marriage preparation is to be effective and beneficial, the first option must be taken.

Closely related to the romantic element is the fact that an engaged couple has a wedding to plan. Whether a couple opts for a simple or an elaborate affair, there are many arrangements to be made. For some couples, preparation for marriage becomes preparation for the wedding, and the significance of what is taking place on the personal and relational level is obscured by the hassle of physical arrangements and pre-occupation with social expectations. Awareness of this involvement in wedding preparations is also important to those conducting marriage preparation programs. Again, it is a reality which demands acknowledgement and confrontation to insure greater effectiveness. And, as Hick's research (1970: 62-63) indicates, those couples whose engagement was most concerned with "planning for the wedding" scored lower on early marital adjustment than those who saw their engagement as "planning for their future marriage together".

There is another pertinent question about the nature of engagement and this demands more attention. The answer accepted influences the very direction which a program of marriage preparation may take. Basically, the question is whether engagement is a period of preparation or testing. Does a couple utilize engagement as a time to prepare for marriage or as a time to test their relationship in order to assess their suitability for marriage to each other?

It is probably true that there is a certain mixture of both elements, preparation and testing, involved in engagement. Nevertheless, emphasis on one aspect over the other will alter the approach and direction of a marriage preparation program. Since disagreement on this question seems to be present in the literature, further elaboration and clarification is necessary.

On the one hand, some family practitioners tend to emphasize the testing aspect of the engagement period and stress the need for couples to evaluate their readiness for marriage and their suitability for marriage to each other, (United States Catholic Conference, 1972: 2; Guldner 1971). This emphasis seems to result from an attempt to prevent future, broken marriages by helping couples to realize their unsuitability, immaturity, and weaknesses before it is too late (Udry, 1971: 235).

Udry (1971: 236-7) suggests that this "testing and screening" aspect is a latent function of engagement which is perceived by scholars as important but which, in reality "plays little part in the couple's thinking". Udry further asserts:

> "For most couples, engagement is a decision to marry, not a decision to think about marriage and test the relationship. From their subjective point of view, engagement emerges as a period of planning and preparation... It does not seem like reasonable advice to say to a couple which has decided to marry, 'Now that you have decided to marry, you can use this period before marriage as a a time for objective scrutiny of yourself and your prospective mate to decide whether this is really going to work out or not'." (1971: 236-7)

Udry, then, emphasizes the preparation aspect of engagement, and, although he does not outline or define his concept of preparation, he does indicate that it is "more realistic to encourage couples during engagement to discover and exploit ways of drawing together, in spite of their problems, rather than to encourage ways of thought which pose breaking relationships as the alternative to harmonious bliss" (1971: 235). This emphasis on the preparation function of engagement is supported to some extent by Hick's research which indicates that the major specific tasks of this period in a couple's relationship appear to be role rehearsal and problem solving (1970: 62-3). Such activities are certainly preparatory in nature and any testing or screening would seem to be secondary or latent functions as Udry suggests.

The importance of this distinction for the construction of a marriage preparation program needs to be stated: if one assumes the testing aspect as primary then the emphasis of the program will be on assessment of the couple's readiness for marriage as well as upon some attempt to predict future, marital success or failure. On the other hand, emphasis on preparation will lead to the construction of a program which accentuates methods of strengthening and enriching the couple's present relationship.

Couples may decide to break their engagement during the preparation process but, as Udry has mentioned (1971: 237) this "will probably not be a result of the couple's decision that their marriage would be unsuccessful, but rather of their dissatisfaction with the courtship-engagement relationship at that time". In this sense, the testing-assessment component of a marriage preparation program can be seen to be a latent function which may have more relevancy to some couples than to others (Otto, 1965: 258).

This thesis accepts the viewpoint that engagement is primarily a time of preparation rather than of testing and assessment. Accentuation of the preparation purpose of engagement would more readily lead to the construction of a program which would include (1) acknowledgement of the couple's decision to marry and acceptance of the significance of that decision; (2) respect for the uniqueness of the couple's relationship and its strengths; (3) emphasis on the process of mutual discovery and the development of insights and skills which will enrich the relationship; and (4) by the very process, initiation of the latent assessment-testing aspect for those couples for whom it is relevant.

From this and the previous observations on the engagement period, the following guideline comes into focus: a marriage preparation program and/or instrument should be so constructed that it will allow the couple to confront the romantic aura and pre-occupation with wedding plans and also help the couple strengthen and enrich their relationship.

At this point, it is necessary to make some comment about a phenomenon which has recently become common; unmarried living together. For example, of the nineteen couples who have participated in the program, Beginnings, over 25% have openly declared that they have been living together[1]. While this situation certainly introduces a new element into marriage preparation, it does not seem to diminish the need to accentuate the uniqueness of the couple's relationship and to involve them in a process of enriching and strengthening that relationship. From the perspective being outlined in this thesis, there can be both positive and negative elements introduced by the experience of living together before marriage. On the positive side, the couple has experienced life together and the romantic aura is less likely to be present. Similarly, they have experienced each other more intimately and intensively and therefore possibly have more awareness of each other and their relationship. This factor would be similar to Guldner's (1971) contention that couples married six to nine months would be more "open" and ready for seriously looking at their relationship. On the negative side, the couple may already have developed some dysfunctional patterns of communicating and relating with each other which could make the preparation process somewhat more difficult. In either case, however, the process of emphasizing the unique qualities of their relationship and involving them in discovery and enrichment focused processes would be essentially the same whether they intend to "formalize" their relationship through marriage or continue to maintain their present arrangement.

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[1] A Program of Marriage Preparation, Red Deer, Alta. May 23-25, 1975, and March 5-7, 1976. Eight couples indicated living together.

II. Current Situation of Marriage Preparation

In the previous section, the context and characteristics of the engaged couple were analyzed in an attempt to produce relevant guidelines for the construction of a marriage preparation program and/or instrument. The present section will employ the same process and purpose but the object of scrutiny will be the current status of marriage preparation in the applied realm. As already mentioned, the pertinent literature is largely descriptive in nature, and therefore, comments included in this portion of the paper will of necessity rely heavily upon this descriptive element as well as upon the writer's personal experience.

The literature dealing with the pre-marital period is ample, though not extensive, and the practice of preparing engaged couples for marriage is actually quite widespread. From this somewhat disconnected body of literature and practice, it is relatively easy to isolate three broad areas of concern which are relevant to the present search for guidelines.

First, the existence of a variety of agencies and professional people involved in marriage preparation and the presence of a variety of program-formats raise some pertinent points with regard to the construction of a program or instrument. In fact, the existence of this variety raises an important question with regard to the direction of this thesis. Given the variety of agencies involved and program-formats employed, is it more appropriate to develop a complete program of marriage preparation or, rather, an instrument which can be utilized in conjunction with any existent program?

Second, while the question of basic approach is unresolved there is a growing tendency in the literature to stress the "dynamic" approach over the "didactic" approach. Discussion of this issue will highlight an important guideline.

Third, the glaring absence of evaluative research and explicit, theoretical foundation for preparation programs specifies a very fundamental need and, therefore, guideline, for the present project.

A. Variety of Professionals and Program-formats:

A brief review of the literature reveals a wide variety of agencies involved in premarital work. As with marriage and family enrichment programs (Otto, 1975: 138) religious groups and church denominations seem to be most heavily and consistently involved in marriage preparation (McDonald and Nett, 1973; United States Catholic Conference, 1973; Guldner, 1971). Although several denominations require engaged couples to participate in some form of formal preparation before marriage[1], it would appear that most ministers of the less legalistic denominations still engage couples in some series of preparatory sessions prior to the wedding[1].

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[1] The Anglican denomination in Alberta, for example. Also the Roman Catholic in the Edmonton diocese if one partner is 19 years or younger.

Involvement in marriage preparation endeavors has spread in recent years to other agencies such as public health services (Schonick, 1975), mental health agencies, various marriage and family counseling bureaus (Adams, 1968) and even medical centers (Guldner, 1971). With the involvement of these different agencies there has naturally been a concomitant increase in the numbers and types of professional people conducting marriage preparation programs (Schonick, 1975).

Pastoral training has notoriously neglected the areas of marriage and family counseling as well as marriage preparation. All too often, the involvement of priests and ministers in these areas is "quite superficial, didactic and 'spiritual'" (Rutledge, 1968: 122). In fact, the United States Catholic Conference's Resource Kit (1973) quoted in this thesis was formulated in part to educate priests and ministers in marriage preparation work.

One would expect that the influx of other professionals into premarital work would have raised the calibre of involvement and expertise, but Rutledge's (1968: 123) spot survey of clinicians indicates that their specific training did not include any treatment of premarital work and/or programming. Although realistically it is impossible at the present time to evaluate the quality of what is being done in marriage preparation in North America one would hypothesize that the benefit derived from pre-marital programs is largely dependent upon the skill of the professional(s) organizing and conducting them. Guldner reached this conclusion after his own survey and evaluation of premarital work in Colorado (1971: 118). *This fact not only accentuates the need for specific training for those involved in marriage preparation but likewise suggests a guideline for the present project: a marriage preparation program and/or instrument should be so constructed that it will minimize as much as possible the dependency upon professional input and skills for its effectiveness.*

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[1] Personal experience from meeting with the Red Deer Ministerial Assoc. All members in attendance indicated some form of formal preparation was employed or urged in their respective churches. See Appendix "A" for comment on compulsory marriage preparation.

Besides the wide variety of agencies and professionals involved, there is a very noticeable variation in the methods and program formats utilized. It is impossible to discuss all the possible combinations and variations in existence, but two basic time sequences and three fundamental format-methods can be easily identified.

As for time sequence, pre-marital work is conducted through a once-a-week series of sessions (McDonald and Nett, 1973: 39) or on the basis of a single block of time usually encompassing one weekend (McDonald and Nett, 1973: 3). The literature does not identify any evaluation of one time sequence over the other, but McDonald and Nett do indicate that a problem of discontinuity arises in the once-a-week series (1973: 42).

Within both of the identified time sequences, three basic and quite distinct methods are employed. These can be identified as pre-marital counseling, lecture series, and group process.

Pre-marital counseling usually refers to the situation in which one or more professional persons meet with one engaged couple in a series of "counseling" sessions (Adams, 1968; Schonick, 1975; Guldner, 1971). In many instances the term "counseling" is inappropriate in the sense that the couple present themselves with no pre-identified problem and therefore no need for counseling, strictly speaking. As its name implies, the lecture series involves a number of presentations by a variety of "experts" on various aspects of married life. This might include a minister, a doctor, a lawyer, and a marriage counselor (McDonald and Nett, 1973: 39). Although the lectures are naturally delivered to a group of engaged couples, this method, in its pure form, is distinct from the group process method in that little or no opportunity is given for interchange and/or discussion among the couples. On the other hand, the group process method tends to de-emphasize the professional input and promotes group sharing as the main vehicle of instruction and preparation (McDonald and Nett, 1973: 53-55). Again, the variation is almost limitless both in structure and emphasis. "Group process", for example, may include so called "experts" or married couples as facilitators (United States Catholic Conference, 1973: 247), may place emphasis on simple group discussion, group "encounter", or even on what Otto calls "two person experiences" (1975: 139) where the couples meet with a group of other couples but the accent is placed on the interaction between the partners of each couple.

The purpose of this brief description of the current status of marriage preparation was to emphasize the variation both in the agencies and professional people involved as well as the variation in the actual methods or formats employed. Acknowledgement of this variation is essential and raises two points.

First of all, given the existence of a wide spectrum of established programs and formats, the question arises as to whether it is more beneficial to construct a complete, outlined program of marriage preparation or to create an instrument which could be utilized in conjunction with any, already existing program or within any of the above mentioned basic methods. This writer's preference is for the latter course of action because (1) there is little or no data indicating which type of program-format or which basic method is more effective. (2) Packaged programs still rely heavily upon the understanding and skills of the professionals who conduct them while an instrument can be more easily adapted to minimize this dependence where professional training or competence is inadequate. (3) An instrument could be more readily employed and integrated by the wide variety of professionals conducting the programs. (4) The construction of a marriage preparation instrument in conformity with the guidelines identified in this thesis would be more easily accomplished. The inclusion of such an instrument within any established program would help insure that these guidelines are at least in part fulfilled. (5) The possibility of constructing an entire program using such an instrument as a foundation would still remain. (6) Finally, the goal of obtaining scientific evaluation appears more possible with the use of a specific instrument.

Since the course of action favoring the construction of a marriage preparation instrument has been taken, a second concern emerges from the variation both in professionals involved and methods employed. This concern can be stated as a guideline which does not apply to marriage preparation generally but only to this specific instrument: the instrument should be so constructed that it will be employable by all professionals and be capable of being integrated within any of the methods or program-formats presently in existence.

B. A Question of Basic Approach:

In a previous section of this paper the various program-formats and basic methods currently in use in the marriage preparation field were outlined and briefly examined. The present concern is much more crucial and more fundamental than the question of format or method. In fact, this issue -- the question of approach -- appears to underlie the question of method or format and dictates, at least in part, whether or not any given method or format will be effective. To be more specific, while there does not seem to be any unanimous preference in the literature for one method over the other (counseling, lecture series, group process), there is a growing concensus that the dynamic approach is more effective than the didactic approach (Mace, 1972: 9-10; 1974: 194).

Simply, the two approaches can be contrasted by viewing one, the didactic, as informational learning, and the other, the dynamic, as experiential learning. The former tends to be more general, factual, and theoretical (Rutledge, 1968: 122-125) while the latter tends to be more personal (McDonald and Nett, 1973: 42; Mace, 1972: 9-10), specific, and functional (Rutledge, 1968: 125; Hinkle and Moore, 1971: 153).

The current trend away from the didactic approach is not limited to marriage preparation but extends to marraige education (Bowman, 1970) and marriage enrichment (Mace, 1975) as well. As Bowman (1970: 117) points out: "Marriage and family life education courses are a reality; but education for marraige and family living is still a dream". David Mace states the reasons for his change from the didactic approach to the dynamic as follows:

> "Giving information is a valuable service, and in certain critical life situations it can be decisive. But in general I have been forced reluctantly to the conclusion that it has limited results. The theory behind it is that the recipient of the information uses it to change his behavior

> by a process of self help. Investigation convinces me that he does nothing of the kind... People seldom really change as a result of reading books, hearing lectures, or even of exchanging opinions.
>
> What brings about behavior change is experiencing...therefore, the only kinds of programs that really offer us a chance to build better families, on a scale commensurate with our present needs and opportunities, are programs that use the dynamic approach." (1974: 194)

The move toward favoring the dynamic approach is fairly widespread. The United States Catholic Conference committee organized to re-structure the Catholic Pre-Cana program concluded:

> "It is incomplete to consider that Pre-Cana is just to inform the couple about what might happen in marriage...Pre-Cana is not merely a lecture on Christian marriage. It must be an experience centered learning process in which the individual couple listen, communicate with each other...manifest their own feelings about marriage, and through a process of dialogue, internalize certain basic concepts on Christian marriage." (U.S.C.C., 1973: 8)

Similarly, McDonald and Nett (1973: 39-43) report altering the basic information-giving, didactic approach of the Des Moines program three different times with little added success or effectiveness. They finally settled on another method, a group process method which provided a structure "whereby couples could get involved more intensely in a dialogue about themselves and their relationship". And, finally, although Guldner's research led him to select a post-marital program over a pre-marital one, he does conclude that "there is a greater likelihood that the material will be retained when the couple are given freedom to share and explore their feelings and carry the sessions than when the sessions are more didactic in nature" (1971: 118). It should again be emphasized that Guldner's research evaluated marriage preparation methods in which the didactic approach was utilized; that is, where "the minister had talked on the value of love, marriage, sex, etc., and that they (the couples) had done little sharing of their own feelings and experiences and ideas" (1971: 115). Eleven of the eighteen couples interviewed could remember little of what was said. Guldner's subsequent decision to move to a post-marital program certainly follows from his findings, but, at the same time, his blanket denial of the value of pre-marital intervention (1971: 118) is invalid as only the didactic approach had been utilized in the marriage preparation programs in which his research couples participated.

The dominant tendency in the available literature is to accentuate the need for the dynamic approach in marriage preparation work. Besides emphasizing experiential learning, the dynamic approach is characterized by couple interaction and communication (United States Catholic Conference, 1973: 8, 11-12; Rutledge, 1968: 125; McDonald and Nett, 1973: 42), functional practice of relating skills (Hinkle and Moore, 1971: 153), development of self and mutual awareness by the couple as well as relationship evaluation (Knox and Patrick, 1971: 112; Mace, 1972: 9-10). Through the experiential process of learning about and from each other, the couple engages in communication about mutual attitudes, values, goals and motivations (Bowman, 1970: 117; United States Catholic Conference, 1973: 8, 11-12) which is conducive to functional, behavioral change (Mace, 1974: 194-5).

The primary emphasis of the dynamic approach is on experiential learning. This approach lends itself to the fulfillment of two guidelines previously indicated in this paper; namely, consideration of the uniqueness of each couple and emphasis on the relationship as it exists in the present.

The guidelines emerging from the above consideration of the question of approach is obvious: An instrument of marriage preparation should be so constructed that it will be dynamic in approach and thereby provide couples with an experiential learning opportunity.

C. The Absence of and the Need for Evaluative Research:

The preceding section identified the growing consensus among professionals regarding the superior effectiveness of the dynamic approach. Similarly, it has been frequently mentioned that there is little indicated preference for one method or program-format over another, although the lecture series method appears to be receiving disfavorable comment due to its obvious dependence upon the didactic approach (United States Catholic Conference, 1973: 8; McDonald and Nett, 1973: 39-43). At the same time, however, it must be emphasized that consensus and preference, while indicating general trends and experiential evaluation, do not indicate effectiveness. Although speaking specifically of marriage enrichment programs, David Mace's observation can be applied with equal force to the related area of marriage preparation: "Since these programs are relatively new, our judgments of their effectiveness are largely subjective. We very much need some testing out of these judgments by objective measurement" (1975: 172). This straight forward statement encapsulates the most glaring lacuna in the literature on marriage preparation -- the total absence of objective, evaluative research.

Schonick (1975: 322) reports finding "surprisingly few guidelines for pre-marital counseling" in her search through the literature, and McDonald and Nett (1973: 43) were unable to find any evaluative study of marriage preparation programs. While these latter authors did conduct an evaluative survey of the Des Moines Program (1973: 79-89), the thrust of the study was limited to obtaining biographical data from former participants as well as their subjective impressions of the program. Guldner's limited survey of eighteen couples in Colorado was of a similar nature and scope (1971). After months of reviewing the literature, this writer has been unable to discover even one objective, evaluative study of marriage preparation programs. Mace's (1975: 172) comment on marriage enrichment programs applies equally well to the area of marriage preparation; the wide variety of programs are being constructed and conducted on the basis of preference and subjective evaluation with no objective testing of effectiveness.

Although subjective evaluation of programs is certainly necessary for further planning and future alteration of a given, specific program (Payne, 1971: 59), objective research is likewise essential if the achievement of goals, particularly of long-range goals, is to be assessed. The reasons for the absence of such research in the applied field of family life education, and particularly, marriage preparation will now be considered.

In the first place, many practitioners, especially clergymen, have little or no theoretical training in the area of marriage and family life. These perhaps allow the conviction that something is needed to drift into the assumption that it is therefore effective. Second, there is a general gap between theory and practice (Kammeyer, 1968). Third, when evaluation is conducted, "interest in resulting data is more likely to focus on their programmatic implications rather than on theoretical questions" (Payne, 1971: 59). Fourth, and this is related to the previous point, few applied programs are based on specific, theoretical foundations, and, because of this, objective research does not hold enough promise of advances in sociological and psychological theory to attract the research scientist (Kammeyer, 1968: 33-36). Finally, most family life education programs and this certainly includes marriage preparation programs, are designed with very broad, almost unmeasurable goals which make subsequent objective evaluation of effectiveness nearly impossible in objective terms (Pickerts and Fargo, 1971: 84-85). This last reason, of course, is closely related to the absence of theoretical foundations which would enhance the specification and limitation of goals.

As mentioned, there is at the present time an increasing number of professionals involved in marriage preparation work and a wide variety of programs employing different methods and approaches. Similarly, there are numerous instruments, both written and audio-visual, available to the practitioner for use in pre-marital work. None of the programs and instruments of which this writer is aware appear to be founded upon any specific theoretical model. Perhaps the absence of both a theoretical foundation and subsequent objective research in the marriage preparation field should be accepted and remain unchallenged. But, on the other hand, if most programs are based on preference, subjective evaluation, and vague, unstated theoretical principles, then the question concerning objective effectiveness must be asked. Jackson and Lederer's (1968: 40) statement in reference to marriage is appropriate here also: "Whenever a decision or a system is based on false assumptions it is almost certain to be a failure". Many of the efforts in the applied area of family life education seem to be based on an assumption of effectiveness with few indications of whether the assumptions are true or false!

There are practical benefits to be derived from constructing applied programs upon theoretical models and subsequently conducting objective, evaluative research. Such procedure would eventually help practitioners determine which method is most effective, which holds the most promise of success, and which goals can be realized and how. In the long run, scientific evaluation might determine that much of what is being done today in the applied field is ineffectual, a waste of time, or even detrimental. That this is the case remains possible until assumptions are tested by objective measurement.

The guideline emerging from the lack of theoretical foundation and objective evaluation in the marriage preparation field is clear: a marriage preparation instrument should be so constructed that it will be based on a conceptual model that specifies and limits goals and thereby allows for subsequent, objective evaluation.

D. Summary of Guidelines:

In concluding this chapter, it will be useful to summarize the guidelines which have been identified from the consideration of the participants involved and the current status of marriage preparation. Such a summary will facilitate the organization of the succeeding chapters of this paper and also clarify the objectives of the thesis.

The primary objective of the thesis is to construct a marriage preparation instrument which is consistent with the

the following guidelines. The instrument:

1. will be effective in reaching and helping couples of varied ages, backgrounds, and levels of maturity;
2. will respect the uniqueness of the couple's relationship, place emphasis on the relationship in its current state of development, and involve the couple in working and communicating together to prepare themselves for their marriage;
3. will allow the couple to confront the romantic aura and pre-occupation with wedding plans and also help the couple to strengthen and enrich their relationship;
4. will be employable by all professionals, be capable of integration within any of the methods or program-formats presently in existence, and, at the same time, minimize as much as possible the dependency upon professional input and skills for preparation effectiveness;
5. will be dynamic in approach and thereby provide the couple with an experiential learning experience; and,
6. will be based on a conceptual model that specifies and limits goals and thereby allows for subsequent, objective evaluation.

These guidelines specify the structure objective of the thesis and will serve as criteria for the construction of the marriage preparation instrument as well as for the instrument's subsequent evaluation. Because the instrument will ~~be~~ based on a conceptual model which specifies and limits goals, the use of the instrument will involve a specific objective. The objective of the instrument will be to increase consensus between the partners of each couple.

The presence of these two objectives -- a structure objective and an instrument objective -- will necessitate the employment of two evaluative processes. One evaluation will be conducted in a preliminary and partial fashion to determine whether or not the constructed instrument is consistent with the guidelines. A second evaluation process will be outlined and the operationalization of this process will ascertain the effectiveness of the instrument in achieving its objective.

CHAPTER III

CONSTRUCTION OF A MARRIAGE PREPARATION INSTRUMENT

Six guidelines for the construction of a marriage preparation instrument were identified in the preceding chapter. The final guideline specified the need to base the instrument on a conceptual model. The realization of this guideline is foundational in the construction of the marriage instrument.

This chapter will be concerned with the selection of an appropriate theoretical foundation, the formulation of a conceptual model, and the construction of a marriage preparation instrument on the basis of the identified conceptual model.

I. Selection of a Theoretical Foundation

A. Symbolic Interaction Theory: An Applicable Framework:

The population for whom the instrument is intended has been identified as engaged couples who are about to experience one of the transition stages in the family life cycle. Two aspects of this social reality need consideration when selecting an appropriate theoretical framework; namely, the dyadic relationship of the engaged couple and the development of that relationship as it experiences the effects of processual and social time. To be appropriate for the present purpose, then, a theoretical framework must be capable of yielding a conceptual model which can relate to the interpersonal dynamics of a dyadic relationship within a developmental perspective.

Symbolic interaction theory has been selected as a framework from which the necessary conceptual model will be derived. This writer's preference has entered into this selection, but other criteria have also been considered. First, symbolic interaction theory has enjoyed considerable application to the specific area of concern, namely, marriage and family life (Broderick, 1971; Hill and Hansen, 1968; Stryker, 1964, 1972a, 1972b). Second, symbolic interaction theory has been productive of sufficient research to have acquired some clarification of conceptual formulation (Broderick, 1971; Stryker, 1972b). Third, the framework is appropriate in relating to the two basic elements of the social reality, interaction and process or change. It is also capable of responding to the requirements outlined by the previously established guidelines. This third claim requires further discussion and substantiation.

B. Symbolic Interaction and the Dyadic Relationship:

The most critical element of the social reality under consideration is the interpersonal relationship -- its characteristics and dynamics -- which exists between a man and a woman who are approaching marriage. As Hill and Hansen observe (1968: 489) the symbolic interaction framework is "highly developed" in treating the area of interactional behavior. While this theoretical framework basically presents "a set of propositions seeking to explain the social psychological processes of socialization and personality development" (Stryker, 1964: 125) its main focus is upon social interaction both as a process and source of socialization and personality development (Stryker, 1964: 136-142; Blumer, 1969: 20-21, 53). The basic concepts of this framework relate to "self" and "other" and the interpretation of the relationship between them (e.g. Hill and Hansen, 1968: 489 chart; Schvaneveldt, 1966: 103-109).

A brief glance at any of the basic works on symbolic interaction theory will substantiate that it is highly developed in the area of social interaction (Stryker, 1964; Blumer, 1969; Rose, 1962; McCall and Simmons, 1966). Hurvitz (1970, 1974) has found the principles and concepts of symbolic interaction theory to be highly adaptable and useful in dealing with couple interaction in marriage counselling (1970: 64).

The second important characteristic of the social reality is that it is a relationship in process; that is, a couple experiencing one of the family life-cycle transitions. There is a developmental aspect (Rodgers, 1973). At the same time, there is a "before" and "after" expectation; because of marriage preparation, a couple is expected to be "better off" (Mace, 1972: 25) or capable of dealing with the transition of marriage in a more functional manner. Here, too, the matter of social or processual time (Hill and Hansen, 1968: 488) enters the picture, and the question arises as to whether or not the symbolic interaction framework can cope with this factor.

Writing in 1960, Hill and Hansen indicate that with regard to social time the interactional framework "can focus on short episodes of interacts, but in actual studies time is often frozen; processes treated statically" (1968: 489 chart). Nevertheless, because of the eclectic nature (Broderick, 1971: 42-43) of the emerging developmental approach to the study of family life, many of the assumptions and working concepts of symbolic interaction theory have been given a developmental perspective. Hill and Hansen (1968: 495) attest to the dependency of the developmental approach on interactional assumptions and concepts. The result of this relationship between the two theoretical frameworks is a more dynamic and developmental view of the interaction process among proponents of symbolic interaction theory.

Perhaps most relevant to the present concern is the conceptualization and acceptance among symbolic interaction theorists of the cumulative nature of interaction in an ongoing relationship. Blumer (1969: 20) asserts that a "new form of joint action always emerges out of and is connected with a context of previous joint action. It cannot be understood apart from that context; one has to bring into one's consideration this linkage with preceding forms of joint action." Later, in the same text, Blumer adds: (110)

> "Human interaction flows on in a movement of definition and redefinition of one another's action. It is built up from point to point as each takes the other into account again and again and is similarly taken into account by the other. Each participant in the face of a given expression of action of the other must note and judge the expression and use it as a factor for guiding his own action. This imparts to the transaction a developing character as it passes from one definition to another and depends on the selections, judgments and decisions that are made."

In a similar vein, McCall and Simmons (1966: 203) view the life history of an individual as "a reflexive sequence of interactions in which any given interaction is influenced by the sum of past interactions and in turn influences the sum of future interactions." In the view of these writers, then, there is a developmental or processual element in human interaction. Not only is there a definite dynamic process involved in on-going interaction (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 144) but there is also a cumulative aspect which is both past and future related (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 203). In fact, this cumulative process of interaction can actually be described as a mutual socialization process (Turner, 1970: 8; Heiss, 1968: 50) through which the interactants continually give new shape and form to their relationship and its continuing interaction. In and of itself, interaction is dynamic and self-influencing -- it is developmental in that it "changes as it continues" (Glaser and Strauss, 1972: 450).

Therefore symbolic interaction possesses the necessary tools to relate to the social reality of the engaged couple. The main facets of this reality are dyadic interaction and the developmental and/or cumulative characteristics of that interaction. The possibility of conceptualizing the "before" and "after" phenomenon implied by pre-marital intervention likewise appears real.

A developmental concept is difficult to both operationalize and measure (Hill and Hansen, 1968: 496), but at least the conceptualization of the developing nature of interaction is available within the selected framework of symbolic interaction.

C: Symbolic Interaction and Thesis Guidelines

In the first chapter of this thesis six guidelines were identified as being necessary in the construction of a marriage preparation instrument. While some of these guidelines arose out of the characteristics of the identified social reality -- the engaged couple -- others emerged from an analysis of the state of marriage preparation programs in the literature and applied field.

The realization of several of the guidelines will be assessable only when the completed instrument is operationalized and conducted with actual couples and within existing programs. This is particularly true of the third and fourth guidelines which refer to the need to confront the romantic aura of the engagement period and to minimize the dependency on professional input. In the other guidelines, however, issues are raised which must be dealt with on the theoretical or conceptual model level.

The present intention is not to prove or substantiate that the proposed instrument does fulfill these guidelines but rather to indicate that symbolic interaction is a theoretical framework which embodies conceptual tools adequate for the task. The mention and use of some of these conceptual tools at this stage will obviously anticipate the formulation of the conceptual model, but it is hoped that this fact will be neither confusing nor misleading.

In the first guideline the difference between couples participating in marriage preparation and between the partners of each participating couple was noted. Symbolic interaction appears to rest upon the element of difference and variation in the sense that each individual is seen as having created his own "reality world" (Cantril, 1963: 291). This consists of definitions, meanings and expectations which become operational in, and have influence on, all current episodes of interaction. In conceptual terms, this "reality world" constitutes an individual's perspective which "is an outline scheme which, running ahead of experience, defines and guides it" (Shibutani, 1963: 99). This perspective is built up through past experiences and remembrances (Cantril, 1963: 290; Strauss, 1972: 383) and its formulation for each individual is influenced by social and cultural factors (Brown, 1934: 203; Stebbins, 1967: 156) as well as by one's value system "which is related to his class, education, religious and ethnic identification" (Hurvitz, 1970: 70). It is this individualized perspective which, in part, accounts for the conflict and divergence between interactants (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 239). This expresses the fact that the same thing can mean different things to different people and different things to the same person at different times (Hurvitz, 1974: 147). The manner in which individuals define things, events and others is bound to be different, and this difference is crucial in conceptualizing the process of interaction between them (Stebbins, 1967: 156).

The symbolic interaction framework accentuates the differences between individuals, and these differences are emphasized as crucial elements in the interaction process. The necessary conceptual tools are available within the symbolic interaction framework, but, on the practical level, this first guideline still requires the creation of an instrument which will be readily intelligible and usable by individuals possessing a variety of background and personal characteristics.

Implicit in the foregoing paragraphs is the element of uniqueness (second guideline) which is possibly the most important consideration in constructing a marriage preparation instrument. The concepts of perspective (Shibutani, 1963) and, more especially, of definition of the situation (Hill and Hansen, 1964: 802; Stebbins, 1967, 1972; Rodgers, 1973: 63) serve to highlight the unique qualities of individuals and relationships. It is logical that the interaction between any two unique individuals will assume characteristics unique to that relationship (Hurvitz, 1974: 146-148).

While the specific term uniqueness is absent in literature relating to symbolic interaction theory[1], the concept is implicitly present. The present status and nature of an on-going relationship possess an historical development (Bolton, 1968: 40-42), and the developing character of this on-going interaction is dependent upon the interplay of the individual qualities, perspectives and expectations of the interactants (Blumer, 1969: 110; Stebbins, 1967: 144). From a different perspective, symbolic interaction views the very process of human interaction to be "a formative process in its own right" (Blumer, 1969: 53) through which the participants forge and create the relationship that exists between them. Implicitly, then, the very process of interacting creates a quality which is unique to that interactional episode and, therefore, to the relationship involved. The element of uniqueness is most forcefully suggested by Schvaneveldt (1966: 111) in his treatment of the basic assumptions of symbolic interaction theory when he states that "the relationship represents more than the sum of the personalities that make it up" and that, for example, "a marital relationship itself influences and changes each partner and this in turn influences the relationship anew".

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1. This writer did not find the term used specifically. (Parallels the absence of the term in literature dealing with marriage preparation -- page 24 of this paper).

Another requirement noted in the second guideline is for emphasis to be placed on the relationship in its present state of development. This requirement can be fulfilled by using the basic concepts of symbolic interaction theory. These concepts are used to analyze the process of interaction as it is taking place (Stryker, 1964: 137-142; Goffman, 1964). At the same time, in symbolic interaction theory both the past and the future are identified as being present-relevant or operational in current interaction episodes. This is done by utilizing such concepts as perspective (Shibutani, 1963), expectation (Strauss, 1972: 383), and plans of action (Stebbins, 1967: 156) or motives and intention (Cantril, 1963: 290). The usefulness of concepts which draw the past and future to the present will emerge more clearly in the actual construction of the proposed instrument.

In the fifth guideline, a need was indicated for using a dynamic approach in marriage preparation programs -- an approach which could provide an experiential learning opportunity for the participants. The fulfillment of such a guideline will depend to a large extent on the structure and format of the created instrument, but, at the same time, there arises a prior, fundamental question as to whether or not a conceptual model derived from symbolic interaction theory includes "dynamic" aspects which can be incorporated into the designed instrument.

Several dynamic concepts are included within the symbolic interaction framework, and these concepts can be readily utilized in a practical manner (Hurvitz, 1970, 1974). These concepts include defining the situation (Stryker, 1964: 141; Goffman, 1964: 71), the related process of interpretation (Blumer, 1969: 5, 51), role taking (Stryker, 1972b: 441; Meltzer, 1972: 6, 14), and empathy (Rose, 1962: 7). These concepts can be employed in a dynamic fashion.

Finally, the remaining guideline calling for the use of a conceptual model, indicates the necessity of specifying goals in order to allow for subsequent, objective evaluation. While other related goals will be indicated later, it will be sufficient at this point to identify what could be the primary goal or objective of a program based on a symbolic interaction conceptual model. This goal arises from what symbolic interaction specifies as the immediate goal of social interaction itself, namely, a congruence of definitions (Stryker, 1964: 141; 1972b: 444) or, as McCall and Simmons (1966: 128, 142) prefer to call it, a working agreement. This goal can be expanded when referring to an ongoing relationship to include what Meade has called "a system of shared meanings" (Heiss, 1968: 444-445).

Symbolic interaction theory was selected as the framework from which to derive the conceptual model required for this project. The foregoing sections of this chapter have indicated the reasons for this selection both in reference to the social reality of the engaged couple and the previously identified guidelines. The following part of this chapter will identify the actual, conceptual model.

II. Conceptual Model and Marriage Preparation Instrument

Symbolic interaction is hardly a complete, fully developed theoretical framework. There are several factions or somewhat diverse "schools of thought" among those claiming to be interactionists (Meltzer, 1970). However, the conceptual tools to be used in constructing the following model are fundamental to symbolic interaction theory. Similarly, only those concepts necessary for the construction of the model will be utilized. A more thorough treatment of the assumptions, propositions and conceptual tools of symbolic interaction theory can be found in one of the appropriate treatments already published. (Stryker, 1964; Schvaneveldt, 1966; Blumer, 1969; McCall and Simmons, 1966; Rose, 1962).

Finally, by way of introduction, the model will be constructed with specific reference to a dyadic relationship although symbolic interaction is not limited in application to two-person interaction (Zaleznik and Moment, 1964).

A. The Conceptual Model

1. Definition of the Situation:

In the language of symbolic interaction, man's social interaction is essentially symbolic in the sense that the meaning and definition of events, persons, and situations "are not inherent or intrinsic in the stimulus itself"(Cantril, 1963: 290) but are assigned (symbolic) in light of one's past experiences, expectations and motivations (Zaleznik and Moment, 1964: 64). In a given instance of interaction, each participant must define or subjectively assign meaning to (a) himself insofar as he must occupy a position, act out a role, and be relatively secure in the interaction; (b) the other person with regard to position, role, motives and intentions; and (c) the specific situation itself with regard to its context, socially ascribed expectations and related circumstances. One's definition of the situation broadly includes assigning an identity to self and other in the specific interaction (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 144; Stryker, 1972a: 23) as well as assigning meaning to any behaviour, object, or task involved in the situation (Blumer, 1969: 114; McCall and Simmons, 1966: 60-61).

Although the process of defining the situation has not received extensive and specific study or attention (Stebbins, 1967: 144; Heiss, 1968: 538) it can be seen as the foundational process of social interaction as far as symbolic interaction theory is concerned. Man's social environment is almost entirely symbolic. A symbol is defined as "a stimulus that has a learned meaning and value for people, and man's response to a symbol is in terms of its meaning and value rather than in terms of its physical stimulation of his sense organs" (Rose, 1962: 5). Value, as it is used here, signifies "the learned attraction or repulsion" felt toward the meaning assigned to something (Rose, 1962: 5).

Man responds not to persons, things, and situations, but to what those persons, things and situations mean to him (Stryker, 1972: 21). In interaction, meaning is assigned -- persons, things, and situations are symbolized -- through a process of defining the situation (i.e. self, other) which is largely dependent upon the use of language, both verbal and non-verbal (Heiss, 1968: 19; Stryker, 1964: 136). Stebbins (1967: 158) defines "definition of the situation" as a "more or less conscious synthesis and personal interpretation of the interrelation of the set of predispositions (definer's learned meanings, motives, expectations, etc.) and the elements of the subjective situation (components of current interaction episode given meaning by the definer)."

The primary phase of the defining process involves the establishment of identities for self and other within the specific interaction (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 60-61, 144). It is a question both of "whom am I in this situation", "what is my role", "how does other see me", and "who is other in this situation", "what is his role" (Foote, 1951: 17-18; Strauss, 1959: 46). The interpretation and establishment of identities is an ongoing, defining process within the interaction episode (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 144; Foote, 1951: 17) involving continual seeking and exchange of information (Goffman, 1964: 71) about mutual expectations and meanings. Self and other take on symbolic meaning (Zaleznik and Moment, 1964: 49-50), and, in this sense, the participants interact not with each other but with their respective images or meanings of each other (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 105-107). During the process, self interacts with self and with other (Blumer, 1969: 13) to determine self-identity as well as other identity. As mentioned, the process of establishing identities is on-going and actually developmental in character; it is never fully accomplished. The process also involves such activities as posing (Heiss, 1968: 17) or projection of "who I would like to appear to be" (Goffman, 1964).

The secondary but essentially interdependent phase of defining the situation involves assigning meaning to the context, objects and tasks involved in, or arising out of, the interaction episode.

In symbolic interaction terms, "objects consist of whatever people indicate or refer to", and "the nature of an object is constituted by the meaning it has for the person or persons for whom it is an object" (Blumer, 1969: 68). Anything, then, can be an "object" in symbolic interaction terms, and the significance of anything is in the meaning given to it by an individual (Straus, 1972: 381). This meaning -- the objectness of a thing -- arises out of the defining process taking place _in_ the given interaction (Blumer, 1969: 68-69). Everything must be defined or given meaning within the interaction encounter (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 60-61). As Blumer puts it: "environment consists only of the objects that the given human beings recognize and know ... and it follows that in order to understand the action of people it is necessary to identify their world of objects" (1969: 11).

In one sense, a task or an activity is a "thing" and therefore can be "objectified" or given meaning. But, since in most instances of interaction, social tasks or activities "are the main focus of the encounter" (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 146) they should be given separate consideration. Similarly, since things take on meaning in relation to plans of action, and activity toward things is carried out in terms of their meaning for plans of action (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 60-61; Blumer, 1969: 68-69) there is a distinction between objects and tasks or activities. This will be discussed more fully later on, but the importance of assigning meaning to things and defining the tasks to be accomplished must be stressed in this section.

2. Immediate and Ultimate Goals of Defining the Situation:

There is a danger in discussing a process such as interaction. In such an analysis the elements of the process often appear to be progressively linked as though one element has to be present and complete before the subsequent elements appear. The very dynamic of the process is in danger of being lost! Within the symbolic interaction framework, however, interaction is a dynamic, continuous process in which all of the elements are seen as interdependent and continually create an on-going process of defining and re-defining (Stebbins, 1967: 162). Such is the case with what might be called the immediate and ultimate goals of the process of interaction.

The immediate goal of the defining process in interaction is a congruence of definitions (Stryker, 1964: 141) or a consensus (Rose, 1962: 6). This writer prefers to use the term selected my McCall and Simmons (1966: 143), namely, working agreement, because it avoids the misleading implications of a term like consensus. This latter term implies uniformity and/or an absence of differences. If this were the case, then few episodes of interaction would achieve the immediate goal! At the same time, "working agreement" preserves the dynamic aspect of the process while consensus can imply a finalized, static state of affairs.

Basically "working agreement" refers to a condition where the participants' respective definitions of the situation are sufficiently congruent (Stryker's term) to allow the interaction and involved activities to proceed. Only when a working agreement has been achieved is co-operative behaviour possible (Stryker, 1972b: 444), and this is the ultimate goal of the defining process. It must be emphasized that "working agreement" does not necessarily mean agreement or consensus in the strict sense (See: Sprey, 1969: 703, who uses consensus in this way). Rather, a working agreement is a "problematic and far from stable" condition (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 142-143) requiring continual re-definition and negotiation (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 127; Heiss, 1968: 18-19). A working agreement may include awareness of differences or disagreement between the interactants (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 127) or even an "agreement" to avoid disagreement or open conflict (Goffman, 1964: 74-75) though it potentially or really exists. A working agreement indicates a sufficient amount of shared meaning (Heiss, 1968: 444-445), and not necessarily, same meaning, between the interactants to allow them to proceed in a relatively secure and organized manner.

In situations where vagueness, incongruity, or conflict exists between the participants' respective definitions of the situation, then uncertainty, anxiety, and either non-co-operative or disorganized interaction result (Stryker, 1972a: 20-23; Goffman, 1964: 76; McCall and Simmons, 1966: 96-98, 239; Zaleznik and Moment, 1964: 28-32). The achievement of a working agreement refers to an essential ingredient of co-operative and relatively harmonious interaction.

This harmonious or organized behaviour is the ultimate goal of the defining process. In the symbolic interaction perspective, "the interplay of behaviour that ensues is a function of such defining activity" (Stryker, 1964: 141) as the interactants act toward things and each other in terms of the meanings assigned (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 60-61; Blumer, 1969: 2-3, 52-54). Chronologically, then, "the definition of the situation immediately precedes the behavior" of the actor(s) (Stebbins, 1967: 158). The very defining of an object or situation motivates behaviour (Foote, 1951: 18) or "provides a directive for action, as if the object were forthrightly to announce, 'You say I am this, then act in the appropriate way toward me'" (Strauss, 1972: 381). The definition of a thing or situation is necessarily prior to any act of the will and subsequent activity with regard to them (Zaleznik and Moment, 1964: 26). In interactional terms, then, it is the meaning of the situation which elicits the human act and not an internal tendency or prior disposition to act in this way or that (Blumer, 1969: 94-96). If the interactants achieve a working agreement then this congruence of meanings will lead to congruent and co-operative behaviour.

Some clarification of the above conceptualization is necessary both to avoid misunderstanding and to prepare for what follows.

First of all, within the symbolic interaction framework, behaviour is seen as following upon meaning. However, this process does not take place in a strict sequential fashion. Rather, it is a process in which meaning and behaviour are interdependent and continually meshing. For example, prior plans of action influence the interpretation of a situation (Stebbins, 1967: 162), and this meaning, once established, elicits action, which in turn alters the situation and calls for revised definition or interpretation (Stebbins, 1967: 158-162). Behaviour is constructed in the course of its own execution (Manis and Meltzer, 1972: 575) and continually altered as the situation acquires, or is given, added or different meaning (Blumer, 1969: 86; Heiss, 1968: 18-19).

Secondly, the "human element" must also be considered. This variable suggests that action will not always follow meaning nor will the action that follows always be correct or appropriate. The interactant may lack sufficient confidence or faith in the defined self to act at all (Foote, 1951: 18). Defensive tactics or moral demands may be inserted which influence or alter the action of both self and other (Goffman, 1964: 5-6). Similarly, unexpected consequences of action may appear and thereby introduce stress and alter the situation in the process (Hill and Hansen, 1964: 32-34). Actually, even though a participant may define a situation and have enough information to establish a fairly clear definition and his course of action, he may opt not to act at all or to act in spite of, or inconsistently with, his definition of the situation (Heiss, 1968: 540).

The interaction process is neither sequentially ordered nor is it absolutely guaranteed in its outcome, but is, rather, a dynamic process involving human participants (Blumer, 1969: 64).

By way of summary, social interaction is conceptualized as a process in which participants define self, other, and situation in order to achieve a working agreement. Again, the conceptual model is concerned primarily with dyadic interaction and the processes which result in co-operative or congruent behaviour and interaction.

The next part of the conceptual model to be described is the factors involved in assigning meaning. This section will then be followed by a treatment or conceptual description of the process involved in arriving at a working agreement.

3. Factors Influencing Definition:

In an episode of interaction each participant is to assign meaning to self, to other (identities), and to the situation with all of its relevant circumstances, things, and proposed courses of action or direction. Numerous factors influence how an individual defines or interprets the present cues of the situation. For the sake of description, these factors will be devided into two broad categories which, in reality, are indistinct; they are, the present-past and the present-future.

The present-past: In symbolic interaction terms, each participant in an interaction episode brings to it "the world of objects, the sets of meanings, and the schemes of interpretation that they already possess," and any new interaction "always emerges out of and is connected with a context of previous joint action" (Blumer, 1969: 20). Essentially, all of the various aspects of an interactant's past -- sets of meanings, values, beliefs, attitudes -- are best summarized by the inclusive concept of perspective (Warshay, 1962: 152-155; Shibutani, 1963).

> A perspective is an ordered view of one's world -- what is taken for granted about the attributes of various objects, events and human nature. It is an order of things remembered and expected as well as things actually perceived, an organized conception of what is plausible and what is possible; it constitutes the matrix through which one perceives his environment ... one's perspective is an outline scheme which, running ahead of experience, defines and guides it (Shibutani, 1963: 99).

Perspective makes the interactant's past relevant to the present; it is a set of predispositions for assigning meaning to things (Stebbins, 1967: 156). One's perspective sensitizes perception which becomes selective in any new situation (Shibutani, 1963: 99-100; Cantril, 1963: 290; Stebbins, 1967: 149). One's perspective is developed out of his entire set of past experiences[1] and has connection with his cultural belief system (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 110-111), significant groups to which he may belong (Shibutani, 1963: 100), and both his value system and personal background (Hurvitz, 1970: 70). All of these factors orchestrate together to form one's perspective which greatly influences the meanings assigned in the defining process.

The present-future: Future-oriented characteristics such as goals, motives, and expectations are intimately connected with, and in part flow from, one's perspective or past set of meanings (Strauss, 1972: 383). However, it is useful to discuss these future-oriented characteristics separately for purposes of integrating these concepts into the proposed marriage preparation instrument.

Future-oriented characteristics which become operational during the defining process are: specific plans of action

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1. This concept of perspective closely parallels Otto's notion of remote preparation for marriage by which he meant the sum total of one's entire past experiences (1965: 258). See pages 8 and 23 of this paper for previous treatment of Otto's concept.

(McCall and Simmons, 1966: 60-65), purposes, motives and intentions (Cantril, 1963: 290-295; Foote, 1951: 15), expectations (Zaleznik and Moment, 1964: 38), and such related things as wishes, wants and desires (Blumer, 1969: 15). These factors are intimately related to one's perspective, but they are distinctively future-oriented and play a crucial part both in assigning meaning to a situation and in striving to establish a working agreement (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 132).

Two points of clarification are necessary at this time. The first point is the question of "how" perspective, motives and expectations operate in the defining process, and the second, related issue involves the matter of prior and consequent attitudes in the defining process.

It is essential in the symbolic interaction framework that perspective, i.e. already acquired attitudes, values, beliefs, goals, not be conceived as determining meaning and subsequent behavior within a specific interaction episode. There is a tendency in both psychology and sociology to view interaction as a "neutral medium" in which the psycho-sociological elements of the participants operate (Blumer, 1969: 66), and this view lends itself to perceiving human behavior as resulting from pre-determining tendencies to act (Blumer, 1969: 96) or predisposing attitudes (Foote, 1951: 15). Within the interactional framework interaction is a formative process in itself in which and during which meaning is interpreted or assigned. The course of behavior follows this process of definition (Blumer, 1969: 66; Foote, 1951: 15). Attitudes, values and expectations do not determine behavior but rather influence the interpretation-definition process which guides behavior.

The second point needing clarification is one that Nelson Foote (1951) proposed and which has entered the mainstream of symbolic interaction thought; namely, that the defining process accounts for attitudes, values, and expectations, and not the reverse (1951: 15-19). This insight is extremely important! It dovetails with the previous point of clarification and has important implications for the construction of a marriage preparation instrument. Foote is not denying that one's perspective -- one's already established set of values, attitudes, beliefs -- influences the definition process, rather, he is asserting that because of the formative character of the interaction process itself (Blumer, 1969: 66), specific attitudes, values, and motivated acts emerge or are formed. These newly formed attitudes are not only relevant to that very episode of interaction but to any proposed course of action involved in that interactional relationship as well as to the future of the relationship itself. Or, as Brown observed, one of the stages of the defining process, especially in critical situations is "the integration of new attitudes into personality" (1934: 201).

The formative character of interaction, along with Foote's assertion, is crucial to the construction of a marriage preparation instrument. Through interaction, an engaged couple is involved in a formative process from which attitudes, values and expectations emerge. In a sense, interaction leads to the development of a "mutual" perspective relevant to their relationship -- a perspective which will, in turn, influence the definition process of all future interactions. Although numerous variables influence the development of attitudes and values in interaction, and while there is no guarantee that these newly acquired attitudes (or, perspectives) will be functional to the relationship, the implications of this conceptualization for the present project are evident. For example, to involve a couple in formative interaction may lead to the establishment of attitudes, values, and expectations which are not only shared but also functional to the positive growth of the relationship.

4. The Process of Establishing Working Agreements:

To this point in the development of the conceptual model, the basic process of defining the situation has been described as well as the factors influencing the interpretation or assignment of meaning to self, other and situation. Now, the question arises as to how the participants create a working agreement out of their respective definitions of the situation.

As previously mentioned, the immediate and ultimate goals of the defining process are the establishment of a working agreement and consequent organized or co-operative behavior.

In order to establish such a working agreement, and therefore, co-operation between individuals respectively defining the same situation, it is necessary to have

> "some process wherein: (a) each acting individual ascertains the intention of the acts of others, and then (b) makes his own response on the basis of that intention. What this means is that, in order for human beings to co-operate, there must be present some sort of mechanism whereby each acting individual (a) can come to understand the lines of action of others, and (b) can guide his own behavior to fit in with those lines of action." (Meltzer, 1972: 6)

Within the symbolic interaction framework, such a mechanism as described by Meltzer is called "role taking" which involves a process of defining the situation as "other" defines it (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 134). Each self plays as accurately as possible the role appropriate to the identity of the other in the situation (Foote, 1951: 16), and, through this process, the self not only attempts to define the situation as other defines it, but also strives to define himself as other does (Meltzer, 1972: 14). Role taking, then, involves a continuous mental interplay of meanings, identities, and behaviors between the interactants as they seek to discern their respective roles, courses of action, and intentions (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 132) in order to establish a working agreement.

It is evident that in an episode of interaction, the role taking process is neither separate from nor entirely distinct from the definition process. The two processes are interdependent. However, it is through role taking that the respective defining processes of the interactants are meshed and made congruent.

Several areas related to the process of taking the role of other need further clarification.

Some writers use the terms "role taking" and "empathy" interchangeably (Rose, 1962: 7; Foote, 1951: 16). While the two terms refer essentially to the same type of process -- entering into another's shoes, so to speak -- empathy carries the added connotation of identifying and "experiencing" other's emotional or feeling state. Although the terms have different shades of meaning, both processes are necessary in order to discern other, and this paper will employ the term, role taking, to include both "taking the role of other" -- attempting to define his role, himself, and his action as he does -- and empathy -- attempting to emotionally experience the situation as other experiences it.

Secondly, role taking leads the interactant to impute identity, meanings, and intentions to other (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 132). He then acts toward other in terms of these imputed factors (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 120-121). The catch enters the process in that active role taking is a skill and largely influenced by self's perspective of reality as well as limited by self's abilities. Therefore, role taking can be accurate or inaccurate, complete or superficial (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 120), but, in any case, the actor formulates his identity and course of action with respect to other in terms of the "image" he has garnered of other through taking other's role.

Thirdly, accurate and effective role taking depends upon other factors such as breadth of experience and observation, conventionality of situation and roles involved, and familiarity with and knowledge of other (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 134). This echoes Meade's contention that accurate role taking required a universe of discourse or a system of shared meanings between interactants (Heiss, 1968: 444). The more participants share in common and the more they know each other, the easier is the task of taking the role of each other. While this is consistent with the conceptual model being developed, another factor, the human element, must be considered. That is, actor's ability to take the role of other and his concommitant possession of information about other would seem to insure the establishment of a more satisfying and co-operative relationship with other. However, actor need not, and does not always act consistently with such knowledge nor toward the "image" created of other through role taking. In this sense, then accurate role taking is associated with satisfying and co-operative relationships "only when the information can be, and is, used" (Heiss, 1968: 540).

Finally, partners in an on-going relationship who develop a system of shared meanings and a relatively accurate degree of role taking (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 120-), experience a cumulative or formative effect which makes future interpretation and role taking easier to accomplish (Zaleznik and Moment, 1964:

25-26). Because of this cumulative effect, participants can more readily participate in anticipatory role taking which "is a form of fantasy in which the individual creates in his mind images of future events and portrays, in this thought processes, what he and others will do" (Zaleznik and Moment, 1964:43). Recurrences in the relationship and the system of shared meanings develop a range of expectations which help the interactants to anticipate each other's future, intended behaviors and definitions (Meltzer, 1972: 6-7; McCall and Simmons, 1966: 65).

The process of anticipatory role taking is important for the present project of creating a marriage preparation instrument. Its significance lies in the fact that (a) it relies on the already developed perspective of the participants for its operation, and (b) it enables the participants to hypothetically take the role of each other in situations yet to be experienced.

The conceptual model being developed is nearly complete except for two further elements which have already received brief mention; namely, the question of the emotional/feeling component involved in interaction and the cumulative aspect of interaction itself. Both require further, specific deliniation.

5. The Question of the Emotional Component in Interaction:

"Among the major adverse criticisms leveled at symbolic interaction theory has been.... its neglect of the emotional dimension in human conduct" (Manis and Meltzer, 1972: 575). While any specific treatment of this component of human life and interaction seems to be absent in symbolic interaction treatises, there are sufficient indications of its relevance and function to permit inclusion of the emotional component in this conceptual model.

To begin with, part of the "situation" which must be interpreted or taken into account are the feelings of both self and other (Blumer, 1969: 64; Hurvitz, 1967: 70). Respective feelings are elements which need consideration in the assignment of meaning and establishment of identities. The participants react emotionally not to the things or situations per se but to what objects and situations mean to them (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 60-61). If participants assign different meanings to the same thing, situation, or behavior, they will experience different feelings with regard to what has been defined (Hurvitz, 1967: 68). This conception of the relationship between meaning and feelings is parallel in many respects to Ellis' A-B-C Theory of personality where human emotional reaction (C) is seen as rarely arising because of the stimulus (A) but because of the individual's interpretation (B) of "A", (1969: 250).

Secondly, the formative aspect of interaction elicits emotional response from the participants. Attitudes, expectations, and perspectives are formed during the course of interaction, and these newly formed elements alter definitions as well as emotional responses. Similarly, the presence or absence of a working agreement established during the interaction influences the emotional responses of the participants (Heiss, 1968: 20-21; McCall and Simmons, 1966: 69, 144-145; Zaleznik and Moment, 1964: 28-32).

Thirdly, the process of role taking includes empathy which denotes getting in touch with and interpreting other's emotional state and responses (Hurvitz, 1967: 65). This empathic process is also significant in anticipatory role taking. Actor attempts to anticipate other's emotional responses and these anticipated responses will affect the identity, meaning and role assigned to other (Zaleznik and Moment, 1964: 343-346).

The intricate dynamics of the emotional dimension in interaction have not been thoroughly treated nor conceptually formalized in the symbolic interaction framework. Nevertheless, there is sufficient indication that (a) feelings (self's and other's) require interpretation in the defining process, (b) the participants' respective emotional states and responses are affected in and by the interaction process, and (c) the process of role taking, whether current or anticipatory, involves awareness of, or expectation of, affective response.

6. The Cumulative Aspect of Interaction:

The cumulative aspect of interaction in an on-going relationship has been discussed at various points in the formulation of this conceptual model; nevertheless, it will be helpful to collect these various comments for the sake of comprehension and integration.

Interaction, first of all, is a dynamic, formative process in its own right (Blumer, 1969: 20, 110) in which there is a cumulative effect (Turner, 1970: 8). Any given interaction episode "is influenced by the sum of past interactions and in turn influences the sum of future interactions" (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 203). This cumulative effect is possible because interaction is formative in the sense that participants develop perspectives, attitudes, expectations, and plans of action in the very process of interacting and striving for a working agreement (Blumer, 1969: 66; Foote, 1951: 15). These developed perspectives in turn affect not only the continuing interaction itself but future interactions as well.

The very process of change, therefore, is essentially rooted in the formative interaction process which leads to definitions of the situation (Stebbins, 1967: 161-162; Glaser and Strauss, 1964: 455), newly formed attitudes (Foote, 1951: 15) and expectations (Meltzer, 1972: 6-7). These then alter the participants' perspectives which they bring to all future interactions.

The remaining elements of the cumulative aspect of interaction are somewhat hypothetical in the sense that their realization presumes an on-going relationship which is co-operative and convergent in nature. These elements involve the development of both a system of shared meanings (Heiss, 1968: 444; Stryker, 1968) and a greater facility to take the role of other in an anticipatory manner (Zaleznik and Moment, 1964: 25; Shibutani, 1963: 100; Meltzer, 1972: 6-7).

This formative and cumulative conceptualization of interaction lends itself nicely to the proposed construction and use of a marriage preparation instrument which, of its very nature, implies a developmental process and the notion of a "before" and an "after".

To summarize, A conceptual model of dyadic interaction in an ongoing relationship has been formulated in the preceding six sections of this chapter. The conceptual model, derived from the symbolic interaction framework, describes interaction as involving a mutual defining-interpreting process aimed at establishing a working agreement and initiating organized, co-operative behavior or action. The operation of past and future-oriented factors in the defining process was outlined as was the process of establishing a working agreement out of the respective definitions of the situation. This process was identified as role taking. Finally, the question of the emotional component was discussed and the cumulative nature of interaction was described.

The following section of this chapter will be devoted to the integration of the conceptual model and the proposed marriage preparation instrument.

B. Integration of Conceptual Model and Marriage Preparation Instrument:

The marriage preparation instrument created in this thesis is a series of six written exercises which attempt to fulfill the guidelines outlined in Chapter I as well as to operationalize the conceptual model described in the preceding section of the present chapter. The format of the exercises is of such a nature that emphasis is placed upon each couple's unique relationship in it's present stage of development. Similarly, the approach of the exercises is dynamic and involves the partners of each couple in an experiential process.

The integration of the conceptual model and the marriage preparation instrument can be most easily understood by visualizing the instrument as creating a "defining situation" as well as involving "situations-to-be-defined".

1. A Defining Situation:

The marriage preparation instrument is a construction, and, as such introduces a somewhat novel and contrived element into a couple's relationship. The immediate effect of this introduction is the creation of a situation which is in need of definition itself but one which is also a "defining situation" because of its nature and construction. The couple must first interpret, define, take the role of the other, in order to establish a working agreement regarding their very participation in the exercises, and, at the same time, the exercises themselves involve the couple in a situation which has been constructed to facilitate the process of defining themselves and their relationship. This latter element -- involvement of the couple in a defining situation -- provides the impetus for couple interaction, and, because of the structure of the exercises, the interactional processes described in the conceptual model are both maximized and formalized. That is, the exercises involve the couple in the processes of interpretation/definition and role taking which the conceptual model has identified as essential elements of human interaction.

As a defining situation, then, the exercises facilitate interaction and the conceptualized processes involved. However, this is not the most important element. The more significant emphasis is placed on developing couple-awareness of their interaction and the processes involved (Hurvitz, 1970: 65). By formalizing and highlighting these processes, the exercises attempt to make the couple more consciously aware of what they are doing. Conscious exercise in these processes will possibly help develop more functional patterns or habits of interaction in the relationship (Mace, 1972: 25). One of the ultimate objectives of the marriage preparation instrument is that the partners become more adept at interpreting/defining and role taking in their interaction and more aware of the significance of these processes in their relationship.

Because the exercises are a defining situation they engage the couple in an experiential process of interaction about themselves and their relationship. This fact has important implications for professional involvement with the couple in that the professional input can be minimized. The prior role of the professional becomes one of facilitation and direction. The professional also has a responsive role should the couple define a need for further counseling.

Similarly, because the very participation in doing the exercises is also a situation requiring definition, the interactants are more or less compelled to define their feelings, skills and knowledge (or lack of these) involved in interacting with each other. Through defining their immediate situation -- the process of completing the exercises -- the couple may define a need for professional involvement either as a source of information and guidance (Hurvitz, 1970: 65) or for counseling in the strict sense (Mace, 1972: 9-10; Rutledge, 1968: 125). In this way, by defining their situation, the couple dictates the need for professional input, and counseling if necessary is sought rather than imposed. So, for example, if the couple cannot achieve a working agreement about doing the exercises or falter in their attempts to define and take the role of the other, then this situation in itself requires interpretation and definition by the partners as part of their immediate relationship/situation.

2. Situations-To-Be-Defined:

Besides engaging the couple in a defining situation, the marriage preparation instrument also specified situations-to-be-defined. Each exercise and, really, each statement of an exercise, creates the setting for the couple to interact about a specific element of their relationship-reality. This specified element, then, presents a situation-to-be-defined, and the processes and factors described in the conceptual model of interaction come into operation. In this sense, each statement of a given exercise specifies a situation-to-be-defined, and the couple must interpret, define, and take the role of each other in an attempt to reach a working agreement or shared meaning about the specified aspect of their relationship.

This process makes it possible for the couple to establish identities and clarify meanings (definition) regarding aspects of their relationship and the "objects" which they relate to mutually. At the same time, the respective perspectives, expectations and attitudes of the interactants become operational and can be mutually clarified as the couple attempts to establish a working agreement and shared meaning. With each "situation-to-be-defined" the interactants not only engage in the processes described by the conceptual model, but also acquire more information about each other (Goffman, 1964: 71), establish a clearer identification of their respective "world of objects" (Blumer, 1969: 11), become more aware of their similarities and differences in perspectives and expectations *i.e*. the present-past and present-future, and possibly clarify definitions and meanings which had previously been either based on assumption (Hurvitz 1970: 65-66) or never expressed in an overt manner (Zaleznik and Moment, 1964: 37).

Since the exercises *create* a defining situation, the specified "situations-to-be-defined" in the exercises will not include the need for, or goal of, immediate co-operative behavior other than that required to continue the defining process. Therefore, the ultimate goal of interaction as described in the conceptual model does not enter into immediate focus. However, should a couple be unable to achieve or maintain a working agreement which enables them to continue the defining process and, therefore, the exercises, this becomes part of the situation-to-be-defined and possibly indicates (defines) the need for professional assistance.

While the ultimate goal of interaction -- co-operative behavior -- is not part of the immediate focus, the goal of establishing working agreements and shared meaning is certainly of primary importance. By interacting about the "situation-to-be-defined" the couple is given the opportunity to establish a working agreement and arrive at a shared meaning about that specified situation. Following the conceptual model, this very process leads to the development of perspectives, attitudes, and expectations (Brown, 1934: 201; Stebbins, 1967: 161-162) which affect all future interactions. The cumulative character of interaction (Blumer, 1969: 110) implies that working agreements achieved during the completion of the exercises will have bearing on future, relevant behavior-oriented situations.

Although the "situations-to-be-defined" are not "real" in the sense that they have been created and contrived, it is assumed that they do relate to the real situation of the engaged couple and present them with the opportunity to establish working agreements and all that this implies. This process also enables the couple to become more aware of each other's defining tools, i.e. the present-past and present-future (perspectives, attitudes, expectations, values). In fact, some of the situations-to-be-defined in the exercises relate precisely to these defining tools; that is, the "object" to be defined is an attitude or a value.

In summary, then, the marriage preparation instrument entails written and verbal exercises which create a "defining situation" for the engaged couple. The exercises are so constructed as to capitalize on the processes of interaction as described in the conceptual model as well as to provide a means whereby the couple can become aware of these processes and grow to be more adept at performing them. The exercises also create "situations-to-be-defined" which give the participants an opportunity to establish working agreements and shared meanings regarding aspects of their relationship. Some of these situations-to-be-defined will specify the actual defining tools which the interactants use in defining the situations of their ongoing relationship.

3. Discussion of Goal:

The primary goal of the marriage preparation instrument is to establish a working agreement. Through utilization of the marriage preparation instrument, it is believed that a couple will acquire a greater number of working agreements, or, more congruence in their definitions -- more shared meaning. Similarly, because of the cumulative character of interaction, it is hoped that the premarital experience will develop a greater degree of working agreement in the marital relationship. This last statement refers not only to the "before" and "after" character of premarital intervention, but also to the aspect of the instrument requiring objective evaluation; namely, does the use of this instrument increase the degree of working agreement-shared meaning between spouses? While this is the primary goal of the marriage preparation instrument and requires objective evaluation, a further point for research emerges in this context; namely, the relationship between degree of working agreement and marital satisfaction. Both of these will be discussed in greater detail in the final chapter.

One final point requires repetition. Working agreement, "consensus" or congruence of definitions does not mean agreement in the strict sense nor does "shared meaning" necessarily signify having the same meaning. Rather, these concepts allow for the existence of differences and disagreement and portray co-operative behavior-activity as taking place with these differences and disagreements taken into consideration. Practically, a couple may disagree, but awareness of this difference can lead to a working agreement in which they agree to disagree and act appropriately in view of the differences.

C. The Marriage Preparation Instrument:

This section of the chapter presents the complete, revised forms of the six exercises which comprise the marriage instrument. Before proceeding, however, three points of explanation are necessary so that the structure and order of the pages which follow are intelligible.

Each exercise will be preceded by a brief explanation relating the given exercise more specifically to the conceptual model. In each instance, this prefatory section will simply be entitled INTEGRATION.

Secondly, each exercise in turn will be titled and have prefatory sections explaining the PURPOSE of the exercise to the participants as well as indicating DIRECTIONS for use of the exercise.

Thirdly, and to avoid repetition, only one copy or form of each exercise will be presented as part of this thesis. Obviously, however, the use of the exercises would necessitate a separate form for each male and female participant.

Finally, it should be noted that the specific format of each exercise was created by this writer. The selection of topical areas to be covered in each exercise was made on the basis of a review of existent instruments and written materials. Some audial materials were also consulted. The scope of topics covered by each exercise as well as by the entire instrument was largely determined by the writer's experience in premarital and marital counseling. The instrument represents an attempt to create an inclusive treatment of the important aspects of a dyadic, premarital relationship.

FIRST EXERCISE: "ME, MYSELF, AND I"

INTEGRATION

An essential part of the defining/interpreting process is the establishment of identities for self and other within the specific interaction episode (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 144). While these identities often include specific role implications, they also involve definition of personal characteristics, tendencies, and qualities. In fact, in the context of an on-going relationship, these characteristics, tendencies and qualities are crucial as they are likely to influence the interpretation and establishment of more specific role identities.

This exercise is designed to help the engaged couple clarify how they see (identify) themselves and each other in a general way. The facet of the exercise which involves each participant in rating his/her partner might be termed the result of role taking activity throughout the historical development of the relationship. The exchange of exercises enables the participants to validate their definitions-identities of each other.

Each statement in the exercise presents a "situation-to-be-defined" and involves the couple in the interactional processes leading to a working agreement regarding that specific element of their identities and relationship.

Finally, since the specific statements for the most part deal with personal qualities and characteristics, the couple is involved in defining and clarifying some "present-past" elements which influence all of their interaction together.

"ME, MYSELF, AND I"

PURPOSE: Over the course of your lifetime, you have developed a whole bundle of characteristics and traits. This bundle, in its entirety, could be called your personality.

The important thing to remember is that these characteristics and traits often govern how you see yourself and others as well as how you relate to others.

Since marriage unites two unique persons in an intimate, on-going relationship, it will be helpful for you to know yourself and your partner as much as possible at this time.

DIRECTIONS: Each of the following statements is followed by two blank spaces. Rate yourself in the first blank and then rate your partner in the second blank.

The rating scale is: 0-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9, where "0" indicates not at all and "9" signifies very much.

Complete the exercise by yourself and then exchange exercises with your partner when both of you have finished. Compare and discuss your answers. Remember, it is important to help each other understand what you mean by your answers and why you answered the way you did. Do not merely compare numbers or ratings! Do you see yourself differently than your partner sees you?

		How I see myself	How I see my partner
1.	I like myself	__________	__________
2.	I find it easy to communicate and to be open about my feelings	__________	__________
3.	I am aware of and sensitive to my partner's feelings	__________	__________
4.	It is easy for me to accept and admit failure	__________	__________

		How I see myself	How I see my partner
5.	I am warm and affectionate	________	________
6.	I readily express my love and affection	________	________
7.	It is easy for me to forgive and express my forgiveness	________	________
8.	There is a tendency in me to be suspicious and jealous	________	________
9.	I prefer to be organized and to plan things carefully	________	________
10.	I accept the differences in others	________	________
11.	I tend to procrastinate	________	________
12.	I am dependent on others	________	________
13.	I make decisions quickly and carry them out	________	________
14.	I repress or hide my anger	________	________
15.	I have confidence in my ability to do most things well	________	________
16.	I become anxious and upset frequently	________	________
17.	I am impatient and lose my temper often	________	________
18.	I accept criticism well	________	________
19.	I am comfortable and at ease with small groups of people	________	________
20.	I tend to withdraw and "clam up" when someone expresses anger toward me	________	________
21.	I tend to be domineering	________	________

	How I see myself	How I see my partner
22. Basically, I am an optimistic person	__________	__________
23. I am submissive; that is, I would rather "give in" than create conflict	__________	__________

24. Looking back at how I've rated myself, the three traits I would like to change to better our relationship are: (give statement numbers)

__________ __________ __________

25. Looking back at how I have rated my partner the three traits which I value most are (give statement numbers)

__________ __________ __________

26. My partner's traits that bother me or create difficulty for me are (give statement numbers)

__________ __________ __________

When you exchange this exercise with your partner, discuss your answers to the following statements first.

27. Right now, I am feeling ____________________ about exchanging this form with my partner.

My partner is probably feeling ________________________.

28. I need my partner to be _______________________ in order to feel comfortable in discussing these exercises together.

SECOND EXERCISE: "OUR RELATIONSHIP"

INTEGRATION

While the engaged couple's relationship involves a dynamic process between them, it can also be viewed as an "object" in symbolic interaction terms. That is, the relationship itself is something which the partners can "indicate and refer to" and its nature "is constituted by the meaning it has" for each of them (Blumer, 1969: 68). Each partner has a definition of the relationship.

In this exercise the couple defines their present relationship to each other. The couple will also do role taking. The exercise presents the partners with an opportunity to clarify needs and definitions of common-place terms. Such terms as love, honesty, affection, etc., can mean different things to different people, and the meaning these terms have for individuals has developed over a life-time of experiences. In the symbolic interaction framework, these terms and the realities they signifiy are part of an individual's perspective and also include the notion of expectation as well. In this way, the respective "present-past" and "present-future" of the partners come into focus during this exercise.

"OUR RELATIONSHIP"

PURPOSE: The two of you have already formed a unique relationship and there is no other relationship exactly like yours anywhere in the world.

Most likely, there are qualities about your relationship which you cherish and value deeply. Perhaps there are also a few qualities which you would like, or need, to be more developed and more present?

This exercise is designed to help you let each other know how you see your relationship, what you value about it, and what you might need to feel better about it.

DIRECTIONS: This exercise includes a list of qualities which people often use to positively describe a relationship. There are also a few blanks provided just in case you might want to add a few other qualities which are not included in the list. Use this list of qualities to complete the questions by yourself.

When both of you have finished, get together and discuss your answers to each question in turn.

Remember, it is very important to say what you mean by the quality you select because, for example, the word "love" or the word "honesty" may mean something different to each of you.

Qualities in a Relationship

Love
openness
communication
togetherness
intimacy
care
companionship
____

understanding
honesty
trust
faithfulness
gentleness
support
kindness
____

tenderness
affection
independence
patience
acceptance
comfort
forgiveness
____

1. The quality which I think is most important for our relationship is ______________________________.

   By this quality I mean ____________________

   ____

   ____

   ____

   ____

   I need this quality in our relationship because ____________________________________

   ____

   ____

   My partner will probably select __________ __________ as the most important quality.

2. The quality which is most present in our relationship right now and which makes me feel good is __________ ____.

   By this quality I mean ____________________

   ____

   ____

   ____.

   My partner will probably select ___________ _____________ as the most present quality which makes him/her feel good.

3. One quality which is not as present, or as strong, as I think necessary is ______________________________.

To me, this quality means ______________

____

____

____.

I need to strengthen this quality because

____

____.

4. Another quality which is not as present as I need it to be is ______________________________.

By this quality I mean ______________

____

____

____.

It is not present enough because ________

____

____.

5. Two qualities which my partner finds not present enough in our relationship are ______________ and ______________________________.

____

After exchanging the forms and discussing them, discuss together the following:

1. Do we see our relationship differently?
2. Do we value the same things?
3. Are some of the needs we each possess in conflict.

4. How can we improve the presence of those qualities which we each think to be important?
5. Should we clarify what we each mean and expect regarding the qualities in the list which we have not already discussed?

THIRD EXERCISE: "MY SHOES - YOUR SHOES"

INTEGRATION

Basically, "My Shoes - Your Shoes" [1] is an exercise in role taking and empathy. That is, each partner not only defines a specified, relational situation, but also attempts to define it as "other" defines it (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 134). The exchange of exercises not only helps clarify definitions and meanings but also enables the partners to check their "images" of each other. These "images" have largely been formed through role taking over the entire historical development of their relationship.

This exercise will also lead the couple to greater awareness and knowledge of each other. Both factors, namely, the exercise in role taking and the development of greater awareness of each other, are important in helping the partners grow in their ability to take the role of other and to empathize (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 134).

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[1] Methodology and technique for this exercise were adapted from: "Discovering Each Other." Marriage: Discoveries and Encounters. Chicago: 1973. Cana Conference - Delaney Publications.

"MY SHOES - YOUR SHOES"

PURPOSE: This exercise is designed to help you discuss some important aspects of your relationship. It will also give you some indication of how well you know each other at the present time.

DIRECTIONS: There are two columns of answer blanks following each statement. Write your answer in the left hand column. Then, put yourself in your partner's shoes and write down in the right hand column what you think your partner's answer will be.

After completing the exercise, exchange papers with your partner and compare. Are there differences? Do you understand what each other means? Do you agree with how your partner sees you?

	Write your answer in this column	Write what you think your partner will answer in this column
1. I feel loved when you	________________ ________________ ________________	________________ ________________ ________________
2. When we argue I	________________ ________________ ________________	________________ ________________ ________________
3. I suspect I hurt you most when I	________________ ________________ ________________	________________ ________________ ________________
4. I feel most understood when you	________________ ________________ ________________	________________ ________________ ________________
5. The best quality I bring to our relationship is	________________ ________________ ________________	________________ ________________ ________________

		Write your answer in this column	Write what you think your partner will answer in this column
6.	One of my weaknesses which I would like to correct is		
7.	Other than our relationship, I am most interested in		
8.	With you, I am most reluctant to discuss		
9.	I am most grateful to you for		
10.	I irritate you most when		
11.	What concerns me most about getting married is		
12.	I usually handle conflict by		
13.	Around your family I feel		
14.	I like you best when		
15.	What I find most frustrating is		

	Write your answer in this column	Write what you think your partner will answer in this column
16. I am happiest when		
17. One problem we need to resolve is		
18. When we are with friends I feel		
19. When I disagree with you I usually		
20. I feel appreciated when you		
21. I feel pressured when you		
22. I'm getting married because		
23. One thing I expect marriage to change is		

After you have exchanged and discussed this exercise, complete the following statements to each other:

Toward you, right now, I feel ______________________________

I think we should ______________________________

FOURTH EXERCISE: "THE HUSBAND AND WIFE THING"

INTEGRATION

The participants in this exercise have not yet assumed the roles of husband and wife. Nevertheless, each partner has a more or less formulated perspective (present-past) regarding these roles as well as corresponding expectations (present-future) regarding the actualization of these roles in his/her impending marriage.

This exercise is designed to help the partners identify and define their respective perspectives (attitudes, values, beliefs, etc.) and expectations. Because of the anticipatory role taking component (see: Zaleznik and Moment, 1964: 43), the exercise will also serve to identify differences, unfounded expectations, etc., which in turn may encourage the participants to establish working agreements and shared meanings. Such anticipatory role taking will also help clarify specific role identities to some extent.

"THE HUSBAND AND WIFE THING"

PURPOSE: Although you are not yet married, you have already formed some ideas about what a husband should be, what a wife should be, and what marriage is all about. You have picked up these ideas and attitudes throughout your entire life. In other words, you have some expectations about your marriage and the husband/wife you and your partner are going to be.

You probably have not thought about these attitudes and expectations nor really discussed them with each other. This exercise is designed to help you discover each other's attitudes and expectations. Hopefully, completing the exercise will help you know each other better, help you discover some of the differences between you and assist you in forming some shared attitudes about your roles as husband and wife.

DIRECTIONS: Again, this exercise allows you to indicate your attitudes and expectations. It also provides you with the opportunity to indicate what you think your partner will answer.

Circle your answer on the left and circle what you think your partner will answer on the right.

After you finish, exchange with your partner and compare answers. Remember, explain to each other what is meant by your answers. Are there differences between you? Will these differences create difficulties? Can you resolve these differences?

KEY: 1. Strongly agree; 2. Agree somewhat; 3. Uncertain; 4. Disagree somewhat; 5. Strongly disagree

1 2 3 4 5	1.	Husbands should not be expected to help with housework, doing dishes, etc.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	2.	Husband and wife should pursue all of their outside activities together.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	3.	A wife can work or pursue a career until children are born.	1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5	4. Husband and wife should have equal voice in making decisions.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	5. It is important for a husband to be able to spend time "with the boys" several times a week.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	6. In important matters the husband should make the final decision.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	7. A husband's main role is to provide for his wife and family.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	8. A home should be kept tidy and clean.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	9. A husband should be home on time for meals.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	10. After marriage, a wife should get further education if she desires.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	11. A husband should discuss his work with his wife.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	12. Husband and wife should not disagree.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	13. Cleanliness of a home is as much the husband's responsibility as the wife's.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	14. Yardwork, painting, etc. is the husband's job.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	15. The husband alone should decide about taking a new job even when it involves moving to another community.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	16. It is better for the husband to be head of the home.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	17. A wife's career/job is as important as the husband's.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	18. Husband and wife should have the same friends.	1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5	19. It is more important for a wife to be a good cook and housekeeper than to be an interesting and attractive companion.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	20. A wife should not be more educated than her husband.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	21. A husband and wife should tell each other everything.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	22. A wife's main satisfaction should be found in the home.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	23. The wife should plan the couple's social and entertainment activities.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	24. A husband and wife should give up activities and interests which the other doesn't enjoy.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	25. A husband should consider his marriage more important than his work.	1 2 3 4 5

FIFTH EXERCISE: "SEXUALITY - A DIALOGUE"

INTEGRATION

While sexuality refers to a pervading dimension of human existence and therefore entails developed perspectives and expectations with regard to male and female roles, sexual activity itself can be considered an "object" in symbolic interaction terminology. Sex is something to which the participants assign meaning and significance.

This exercise is designed to help the partners define and clarify both aspects - sexuality-based roles, and sexual activity as object. Again, the role taking demension is included. Hopefully, the process will also help the participants define and explain their respective attitudes, values, needs, etc., and form new perspectives, attitudes and shared meanings (Foote, 1951).

"SEXUALITY - A DIALOGUE"

PURPOSE: Since sexuality refers to the total expression of ourselves as man or woman, it is impossible to separate totally our attitudes regarding sexuality from those regarding our roles as husband and wife, (previous exercise). However, since sexuality and sexual activity are very important and intimate aspects of your relationship, it is worthwhile to give them special consideration.

This exercise will help you and your partner arrive at a deeper understanding of each other's attitudes, needs and feelings in the area of sexuality.

DIRECTIONS: Each of you will complete the exercise by circling your answer in the left hand column and by circling, in the right hand column, the anser which you think your partner will mark.

When you exchange and compare your answers, discuss the meaning of, and reasons for, your answers until both of you are satisfied that you understand each other.

Again, differences between you may appear. It is important to understand these and to be aware of the feelings and needs each of you is expressing. Do you have different needs? Can you respond to your partner's needs?

KEY: 1. Definitely agree; 2. Agree somewhat; 3. Not sure; 4. Disagree somewhat; 5. Definitely disagree

1 2 3 4 5	1. Women tend to respond more emotionally than do men.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	2. Generally speaking, men are less dependable than women.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	3. Men approach problems and conflicts in a more logical manner.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	4. Women find it easier to express and talk about their feelings.	1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5 5. Men seem to be more concerned about sex than do women. 1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5 6. Women need sexual intercourse less often than men. 1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5 7. Men need job satisfaction in order to maintain their self-esteem or feeling of worth. 1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5 8. Women need to have children in order to feel fulfilled. 1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5 9. Women are more easily hurt than are men. 1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5 10. A wife ought to initiate love-making when she feels like it. 1 2 3 4 5

KEY: 1. Very much/often; 2. Somewhat/sometimes;
3. Not at all/never

1 2 3 11. For me, sex is an important need in our relationship. 1 2 3

1 2 3 12. I am embarrassed by some of my sexual impulses and fantasies. 1 2 3

1 2 3 13. I know what my partner thinks about sex and what value he/she places upon it. 1 2 3

1 2 3 14. I need affection to feel loved; i.e. I need to be held, caressed, kissed, touched, etc. 1 2 3

1 2 3 15. It is difficult for me to spontaneously and freely give my partner affection. 1 2 3

1 2 3 16. I need to be told that I am loved, appreciated and needed. 1 2 3

1 2 3 17. I am afraid that I will be inadequate as a sexual partner. 1 2 3

1 2 3 18. It is difficult for me to say "I love you". 1 2 3

1 2 3 19. I am confident in my knowledge of how my body, and my partner's body function sexually. 1 2 3

1 2 3	20. I have openly expressed to my partner my thoughts, feelings, etc., about the sexual involvement of our relationship up to this point in time.	1 2 3
1 2 3	21. I feel comfortable with my moral values regarding what is right/wrong in sexual activity.	1 2 3
1 2 3	22. I know my partner's moral views in this regard.	1 2 3
1 2 3	23. I feel at ease and satisfied with our sexual relationship so far.	1 2 3
1 2 3	24. I am certain of our plans for family planning and the use of contraception.	1 2 3
1 2 3	25. It is easy for me to talk about sexual matters with my partner.	1 2 3
1 2 3	26. Affection and tenderness are important before, during and after sexual intercourse.	1 2 3
1 2 3	27. I have negative feelings about oral-genital sexual activity.	1 2 3
1 2 3	28. My partner's involvement in an extra-marital affair would disturb me.	1 2 3
1 2 3	29. Sexual intercourse during menstruation would "turn me off".	1 2 3
1 2 3	30. I expect sexual intercourse to be pleasurable and fun.	1 2 3
1 2 3	31. It is essential that sexual partners reach orgasm together.	1 2 3
1 2 3	32. My partner gets sexually aroused quicker than I do.	1 2 3
1 2 3	33. I am certain of the role of the clitoris in sexual fore-play and intercourse.	1 2 3
1 2 3	34. I think I should engage in sexual intercourse even if I don't feel like it but my partner wants to.	1 2 3

1 2 3	35.	My partner's failure to reach orgasm during intercourse could disturb me.	1 2 3

When you exchange the exercise with your partner, discuss your answers to the following statements first.

36. Right now I am feeling ______________ about exchanging this form with my partner. My partner is probably feeling ______________________________.

37. If, I am feeling uncomfortable and threatened by this exercise, I think we should ______________________________ ______________________________.

38. I need more information about sexual matters. Yes ______; No _______.

39. I think we should talk to someone (counselors, minister, etc.) at greater length to help us communicate more freely about our relationship. Yes _______; No ______.

SIXTH EXERCISE: "THIS, THAT, & THE OTHER THING"

INTEGRATION

In the symbolic interaction framework "environment consists only of the objects that the given human beings recognize and know... and it follows that in order to understand the action of people it is necessary to identify their world of objects" (Blumer, 1969: 11).

While a marital relationship comes in contact with a vast array of "objects" some seem to be more crucial in nature than others. This exercise includes some of these more critical "objects" and encourages the partners to get in touch with (to define) each other's world of objects. While both partners are confronted by the same things, the same reality, the meaning assigned to the same thing by each may be very different. Their behavior/activity regarding the same "object" would then differ and possibly lead to confusion.

Again, the defining process and role taking process are involved as well as the factors (present-past, present-future) utilized in interpretation/definition.

"THIS, THAT, & THE OTHER THING"

PURPOSE: The entire spectrum of life's realities has some influence on a marriage relationship. Some of these realities such as money, friends, in-laws, are more important than others, but, in any case, all of these realities necessitate decision making and mutual adjustment.

Since you and your partner are unique persons, you are likely to have different attitudes, expectations, values, etc., regarding these realities.

This exercise is designed to help the two of you share your attitudes and feelings about some of the realities with which you will have to deal in your relationship. These realities are not problems in a marriage relationship unless they are handled in ways which are not satisfactory to both of you.

DIRECTIONS: Again, complete the exercise alone and exchange when both of you have finished. Take your time, clarify things, and attempt to understand each other's attitudes and feelings.

IN-LAWS

1. My parent's feelings and thoughts about my marriage are ____ ____.

   My partner's parents feel ______________________ ____ ____.

2. I want my marriage to be like my parents' marriage in ____ ____.

   I want my marriage to be least like theirs in ________ ____ ____.

3. As far as living with or close to my parents is concerned, I ____

____.

As far as living with or close to my partner's parents is concerned, I ______________________________

____.

4. I think both our parents can best help us by __________

____.

5. An aspect of my partner's relationship with my parents and family that does or could disturb me is __________

____.

6. An aspect of my relationship with my parents and family which probably disturbs my partner is ______________

____.

7. I feel ________________________________ about accepting gifts and money from either of our families.

8. If my family is interfering with our marriage, I think

____.

If my partner's family is interfering with our marriage, I think ______________________________________.

9. If my partner confides in a relative more than me, I

____.

10. As far as visiting our parents is concerned, I think

my parents ______________________________

____

______________________________.

partner's parents ______________________________

____

______________________________.

MONEY

Directions: Circle your answer in the left hand column. In the right hand column, how you see your partner.

KEY: 1. Strongly agree; 2. Agree somewhat; 3. Uncertain; 4. Disagree somewhat; 5. Strongly disagree

1 2 3 4 5	1. I live within my income and means at the present time.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	2. The husband should pay the bills and keep track of finances.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	3. I think insurance (life,____ Home _____, Auto _____) is essential.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	4. It is important to set up a budget and stick to it.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	5. We disagree on spending and use of money.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	6. I am careless about spending money.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	7. We should have a joint checking account.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	8. All major purchases over $_____ should be decided together.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	9. If we both work, all the money should be considered "ours" rather than "his & hers".	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	10. It is important to have a savings account.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	11. Buying on credit is the best way to go in this day and age.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	12. Giving gifts to relatives and friends should be strictly controlled.	1 2 3 4 5

RELIGION

Directions: In this exercise, put yourself in your partner's place and try to answer for him/her.

KEY: 1. Strongly agree; 2. Agree somewhat; 3. Uncertain;
4. Disagree somewhat; 5. Strongly disagree

Answer for your Partner	
1 2 3 4 5	1. God is an important part of my life.
1 2 3 4 5	2. It would be difficult for me to change some of my religious beliefs and convictions.
1 2 3 4 5	3. We have not discussed our religious beliefs enough.
1 2 3 4 5	4. Regular attendance at church services is important to me.
1 2 3 4 5	5. I have some fairly strong beliefs about the meaning and direction of life.
1 2 3 4 5	6. It would be better if we attended the same church and services together.
1 2 3 4 5	7. I am confused about the meaning and place of God and religion in my life.
1 2 3 4 5	8. I agree with my partner's view of what is morally right and wrong.
1 2 3 4 5	9. I think my partner and I have some strong religious differences.
1 2 3 4 5	10. I want my children to have religious education and attend church services.

CHILDREN

Directions: In the space below (and reverse side if necessary) write down your thoughts and feelings about children in your marriage. When finished, exchange with your partner and discuss what each of you has written.

Some of the important points to include are:

1) Do I want Children? Why or why not?
2) How many?
3) When do I want to have the first one?
4) The kind of mother/father I expect to be.
5) The kind of mother/father I want my partner to be.
6) What is most important for children?

FUN AND GAMES

Directions: Circle your answer in the left hand column. Also circle in the right hand column the answer you think your partner will select.

KEY: 1. Very much/often; 2. Somewhat/sometimes;
3. Not at all/never.

1 2 3	1. I wish we had more activities and interests in common.	1 2 3
1 2 3	2. The use of alcohol and/or drugs in our relationship concerns me.	1 2 3
1 2 3	3. There are some recreational activities in which I would like to participate more.	1 2 3
1 2 3	4. I am uncomfortable around some of my partner's friends.	1 2 3
1 2 3	5. It is important for each of us to maintain our different and separate interests.	1 2 3
1 2 3	6. Alcoholism frightens me.	1 2 3
1 2 3	7. My partner's having a close friend of the opposite sex bothers me.	1 2 3
1 2 3	8. We agree on choice of entertainment and recreational activities.	1 2 3
1 2 3	9. I expect that we will do more social things together than separately.	1 2 3
1 2 3	10. I feel less important to my partner than his or her friends and interests.	1 2 3

WRAP - UP

You have shared a lot about yourselves in doing these exercises. You may have learned something about yourself, your partner, and your relationship which you were not aware of before.

In conclusion to this experience, respond to the following statements and discuss with your partner.

1. I am feeling ______________________ about the way we did these exercises. My partner is probably feeling ________ ______________________________.

2. I am ________________________ with the amount of time we spent seriously getting to know each other better.

3. I think our ability to communicate together ____________ ____.

4. Some of the differences between us which might create difficulties in our marriage are:
   ____
   ____
   ____

5. Several things I would like to discuss at greater length are ___________________________________
   ____
   ____

6. As we approach marriage, the greatest thing we have going for us is ____ ____.

7. I would like to _______________________________________ ____.

CHAPTER IV

EVALUATION

The focus of this thesis has been the construction of a marriage preparation instrument which was derived from a conceptual model. This was done to provide an opportunity for subsequent, objective measurement of effectiveness, something which is sorely lacking and much needed in the applied field of family life education (Mace, 1975: 172). However, since this project revolves around the construction of an applied instrument, and one which has taken into account guidelines identified from the relevant literature, it has been necessary to secure subjective evaluation of participants and professionals in order to both refine the instrument (Payne, 1971) and assess, as much as possible, the fulfillment of the guidelines indicated in the first chapter.

The outline of this chapter will be as follows: (1) a discussion and explanation of participant evaluation following partial implementation of the instrument in its pilot or preliminary form; (2) an indication of professional collaboration both in the initial implementation and subsequent revision; (3) the suggestion of a research design to be utilized in conducting objective evaluation of the instrument; and finally, (4) an indication of an additional research implication.

I. Participant Evaluation

On May 23 - 25, 1975 and March 5 - 7, 1976, a weekend program of marriage preparation, Beginnings, was conducted at Red Deer College, Red Deer, Alberta. This program was the result of eight months of co-operative effort on the part of four professional people[1] who are primarily involved in marriage and family counseling. Although the program included professional input, group dynamics, and the use of audio-visual materials, it was the philosophical consensus of the creators that the main emphasis would fall upon the relationship of each couple and provide the partners with a dynamic, learning experience. This directional consensus provided the opportunity to integrate the pilot forms of four of the relational exercises included in this thesis[2]. Depending on the exercise involved, varying periods of time were allotted to the participants to complete them, and professional involvement in the completion of the exercises was limited to giving directions.

Fourteen couples participated in each program of Beginnings. Their ages ranged from sixteen to thirty-four with exactly fifty percent of them falling in the eighteen to twenty-four range. Their educational achievement extended over the entire range from ninth grade to four years at university. The religious affiliation of the participants was quite varied, and they came from urban, rural, and small town backgrounds. The length of their relationships varied from five months to seven years with the majority falling in the one-two year range. Eight of the couples had a five year difference in the ages of the partners. Such diversity provided an excellent opportunity to assess in a preliminary fashion both the subjective effectiveness of the relational exercises as well as the consistency of the exercises with the guidelines identified in Chapter I of this thesis.

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[1] Ren Scotney and Carol Laurich, Red Deer Family Service Bureau; and Margarette Sheppy and this writer, Red Deer Mental Health Services.

[2] The pilot forms of "Me, Myself, & I" - "Our Relationship" - "The Husband and Wife Thing" and "Sexuality - A Dialogue" were utilized in this program.

Following each week-end program, this writer mailed to each participant a five-page evaluation form. Of the fifty-six forms mailed, thirty two were returned, or, fifty-seven percent. Since each participant received an evaluation form, the returned forms actually represent at least one partner of twenty of the twenty-eight couples. The evaluation form covered all aspects of the week-end program but several questions were related directly or indirectly to the exercises. Consideration of these questions provides a partial assessment of the exercises' (instrument's) consistency with the guidelines.

A question directly related to the exercises was stated as follows:

> At various times during the program, you filled out inventories and questionnaires and then exchanged them with your partner. Did you find this process (circle as many as apply):

(23) a. helpful
(2) b. difficult
(1) c. threatening
(0) d. a waste of time
(25) e. increased my knowledge of myself
(26) f. increased my knowledge of my partner
(21) g. helped us to communicate
(2) h. did not aid communication

Comments: ____________________

Two respondents indicated that the exercises did not aid communication. Both were male. Their partners did indicate that the process of doing the exercises helped them to communicate. One of the men who responded negatively was a partner in a couple that balked at the entire program because their minister had forced them to attend[1]. In both instances, the age difference between the partners was at least five years. The female partner in these two couples was age seventeen.

One respondent found the exercises both difficult and threatening. This was a seventeen year old female who also circled items "a", "f", and "g". Her added comment to the question was "there should of been more". The other respondent who found the process difficult was an eighteen year old female who likewise circled items "a", "e", "f" and "g". Her partner was eight years her senior.

Since the time allotted to the participants was insufficient for them to thoroughly complete the exercises during the program, the following question was inserted in the evaluation questionnaire:

---

[1] See Appendix of this paper for further discussion of this situation within the context of compulsory marriage preparat

Did you complete or continue the exercises when you returned home after the week-end?

yes (25) no (4) no, but plan to (3)

The four "no" respondents were from the couples mentioned above where the male partners had responded negatively to the communication value of the exercises. On the whole, the self-completion of the exercises is encouraging especially in view of the fact that the evaluation questionnaires were mailed within one week of the program's completion. This tends to substantiate the desired objective of minimizing the amount of professional input needed to complete the exercises.

Only five respondents added comments specifically relating to the exercises. Two indicated a desire to include more exercises within the week-end program while three respondents indicated that they were keeping the exercises to do again after their marriage.

Of additional interest in this participant evaluation is a question which indirectly relates to the exercises. The question was presented as follows:

For me, the most valuable aspect of the program was:

Three respondents did not complete this statement and four indicated that the entire program was valuable. Three respondents selected one or another aspect as most valuable while eleven indicated directly that the exercises were the most valuable part of the program. The eleven remaining respondents indirectly indicated that the exercises were most valuable with such statements as "getting to know each other", "communicating with my partner", and "spending time together". The exercises provided the only opportunity during the week-end when these experiences could have taken place.

The remaining part of the program-evaluation which has relevance for this paper is the following statement:

In my opinion, the weakest aspect of the program was:

Of the eight who responded to this statement, none indicated the exercises. One respondent found the whole program "boring", two indicated a particular movie as the weakest aspect, and five commented that the amount of professional input was too much. This last criticism reconfirms this writer's preference for the dynamic, experiential approach. The one respondent who found the entire program boring indicated that the exercises were the most valuable aspect. He also found that the exercises increased his knowledge of himself and his partner.

While the number of participants evaluating this partial and preliminary use of the exercises has not been large, the subjective evaluation conducted suggests that the exercises fulfilled the requirements of the guidelines.

The possible exception is the first guideline which will be discussed shortly.

The exercises allowed each couple to dialogue privately about their relationship in its current state of development. The actual design of the exercises respected the uniqueness of each couple's relationship. Similarly, the structure involved the couple in communicating together about their relationship. Sixty percent of those responding to the questionnaire indicated that the exercises aided the communication process. This indicates that the exercises are consistent with the second guideline.

The third guideline indicated a need to confront the romantic aura of the engagement period and to enrich the relationship of each couple. The process involved in doing the exercises as well as the topical content of the exercises confronted each couple with the reality of their relationship and the serious aspects of marriage. Seventy-two percent of the respondents indicated that the exercises were helpful. Nearly eighty percent of the respondents to the questionnaire found that the exercises increased their knowledge of self and of their partner. For these respondents, the exercises provided an enriching, growing experience.

The preliminary and partial use of the instrument in conjunction with Beginnings provided some indication of consistency with the fourth guideline. The exercises were easily integrated within a program employing a variety of other methods and materials. The input of the professionals, as far as the exercises were concerned, was limited to giving directions. Nearly eighty percent of the respondents were able to complete the exercises without professional assistance.

The fifth guideline indicates a need for a dynamic approach. The structure of the exercises involved each couple in a communication and clarification process. This process provided the partners with an experiential learning opportunity. With few exceptions, those responding to the questionnaire evaluated the exercises as a growth experience.

However, the few exceptions do raise some question with regard to the fulfillment of the first guideline. This guideline identified the need for a marriage preparation instrument to help participants of varied ages, backgrounds and levels of maturity. The participants who responded negatively to the exercises or who found the exercises difficult or threatening were all partners in a relationship involving at least one teenager (age: sixteen-eighteen). As mentioned, the partners of one of these couples attended the program with a very negative if not defiant attitude. In the four relationships involved, only two of the eight partners had completed high school.

The interesting consistency in the four relationships involved is that each had at least a five year difference between the ages of the partners. The female in each instance was the younger partner. The exercises were evaluated positively by participants involved in six relationships where both partners were teenagers. Young age alone does not seem to account for the negative reaction to the exercises.

One might conjecture that the age difference between the partners is the significant factor. Following symbolic interaction theory, the developed perspectives of the partners could be seen as sufficiently different to make the process of doing the exercises both difficult and ineffective.

Similarly, it might be assumed that the role taking-empathy skills of the younger partners were not highly developed.

Whatever the reason, it is impossible at the present time to adequately assess the instrument's consistency with the first guideline. A conclusive assessment will have to await implementation of the instrument in its completed form with participants who are not involved in any other type of marriage preparation program.

The partial and preliminary evaluation of the instrument did provide some assessment of consistency with the guidelines. Since the four exercises used in Beginnings were in "pilot" form, this partial implementation also provided an opportunity to critique the exercises with regard to structure, clarity, and topical content. These aspects were evaluated by the four professional people involved in conducting Beginnings. Before discussing this professional collaboration, however, it is necessary to indicate the limitations of the instrument as well as to point out a caution connected with the instrument's use.

A. Limitations of the Instrument:

There are three limitations associated with the use of the marriage preparation instrument. The first limitation involves the matter of honesty. The structure and design of the instrument is based on a presumption of mutual honesty. There is nothing in the instrument to prevent one or both partners from employing deception, being manipulative, or withholding information.

The second limitation arises from the structure of the instrument which is designed to promote definitional clarification and working agreement through communication. The use of the instrument presumes a basic ability to communicate. Similarly, there is no control over the extent or the depth of communication between the partners. The exercises could be completed in a rapid and relatively superficial manner.

Thirdly, use of the instrument does not guarantee behavioral change. Definitional clarification may indicate a need for behavioural change by one or both partners, but such change remains dependent upon personal willingness and initiative.

It should be noted that the above limitations could be partially overcome with greater involvement in the process by a competent professional person. Such involvement would become mandatory should the couple define a need for counseling.

B. A Caution to Professionals:

The marriage preparation instrument was constructed to minimize dependency on professional input and direction. The design of the instrument also permits inclusion of the exercises as part of an existing program. However, professional people should use the exercises responsibly and cautiously when giving them to individual couples or using them as part of a structured program.

The exercises introduce couples to a communication and clarification process which some might find difficult and/or threatening. In the process of defining their situation, a couple may discover unknown differences and unsuspected problems. Some partners may become upset by their inability to communicate, to reach a working agreement, or to resolve conflict. All of these possibilities require serious attention by professionals who use the marriage preparation instrument in their work.

The professional has a responsibility to be available to a couple when the need for counseling or direction arises. Similarly, the professional person using the marriage preparation instrument must be competent to respond to a defined need for premarital counseling.

II. Professional Collaboration and Evaluation

As mentioned, the four professionals who designed and conducted the Beginnings program of marriage preparation had opted to place major emphasis on the relationship of each participating couple. The main vehicle for achieving this objective was a series of written exercises developed to facilitate couple interaction as well as the role taking/empathy process. It was hoped that this approach would provide a dynamic experience for the couples and likewise enable couples coming with a variety of background factors to each deal with their relationship in its present stage of development.

The exercises developed by this writer for the program received preliminary evaluation from the other four professionals with regard to structure, process, methodology, and topical content. Appropriate alterations were made before implementation of the exercises as part of the program.

Following the program, further evaluation was conducted by the same professional people. This evaluation was informal and verbal.

There was a consensus that the process-methodology was effective and that the role taking/empathy factor was most valuable. Similarly, the topical content of the exercises was evaluated as appropriate. However, during the course of the program, several couples approached one or another professional because of confusion arising from the structure of a given exercise or from the unclear meaning of statements or questions in an exercise. These sources of confusion were noted, and the exercises were revised to their present form according to the suggested alterations.

III. Research Design for Objective Evaluation

The objective evaluation of a marriage preparation instrument obviously involves a "before" and "after" aspect since the primary motivation for premarital intervention is to help foster a more functional and satisfactory marital relationship (Mace, 1972). Added to this complicating factor, namely, the need for some sort of longitudinal measurement, is the fact that most premarital programs possess ill-defined, or, at best, general goals which are practically immeasurable. The present marriage preparation instrument was derived from a conceptual model of human interaction, and the primary goal designated by the model and incorporated in the instrument is one of increasing working agreement in the dyadic relationship. This specification of goal is one necessary step in the facilitation of objective evaluation of applied programs (Pickarts and Fargo, 1971: 84-85).

Similarly, the conceptual model based on symbolic interaction theory indicates fundamental direction for objective evaluation. That is, the symbolic interaction model conceptualizes interaction as possessing a cumulative-developmental character which influences all subsequent or future interaction. The conceptual direction is present for dealing with the "before" and "after" aspect of marriage preparation. Bolton (1961: 49) suggests "that the character and texture of shared understandings and techniques of consensus built up in the premarital period may be a significant determinant of the mode of adjustment in the crucial early marital period." While Bolton's hypothesis outlines the basic direction of the present research, it would be more precise to state it as follows: That the premarital experience of the marriage preparation instrument will increase the amount of working agreement (shared meaning, congruence of definitions) in the marital relationship. Research designed to evaluate this statement will produce results which will have bearing not only on the effectiveness of the instrument in achieving its specified goal, but also on the validity of the conceptual model and the relationship between model and instrument.

Although this writer does not propose to carry out the suggested, objective evaluation as part of this thesis, an instrument of measurement and its operationalization will be described.

A. Instrument of Measurement:

Since this research proposes to study a sample of couples in their interactional development from premarital status to a specific point-in-time during their marital relationship, the design itself implies a longitudinal study. Campbell (1957) suggests two possible designs: the first involves a pretest-post-test with control group while the second requires only post-test with control group. The former offers the researcher the advantage of being able to measure the effects of normal history-maturation which takes place over the span of time involved and to distinguish these effects from those of the variable (independent) under study (in our case, a premarital program). At the same time, however, such a design requires an extensive amount of time, added expense, and, in the present research, the practical difficulty of finding and pretesting the control group before marriage.

In view of this, the second alternative (post-test with control group) is proposed for this research. When such a design is utilized, concerted effort must be exercised in selecting a random sample (Campbell, 1957) as well as in considering and testing the possible influence of other extraneous variables.

The specific instrument of measurement will involve a two-part questionnaire: the first part will be biographical in nature and attempt to establish differentials among the couples with regard to possible extraneous variables (e.g. length of relationship, age, etc.) while the second part will be adapted from a questionnaire used by Kirkpatrick and Hobart (1954) to measure agreement/disagreement levels in couples at various stages of relational intimacy.

The first part of the questionnaire will accumulate biographical data from each respondent and historical data with regard to the development of each relationship. It is obvious that many factors influence the development and quality of a relationship in various ways and in various degrees. Accumulating the data about some of these factors will permit subsequent analysis of the comparative findings, if any, in order to determine which factors (including the experience/non-experience of the marriage preparation instrument) are associated with lower disagreement or higher agreement scores. This would involve the utilization of the elaboration model of multivariate analysis. So, for example, length of relationship (engagement) will be tabulated and used as a control variable in analyzing the relationship between the marital preparation variable and agreement/disagreement scores. Agreement/disagreement scores would be tabulated for couples whose relationship was less than one year's duration before marriage. The same would be done for couples having a longer premarital relationship. Comparison of the two groups would indicate whether length of relationship has a positive influence on the agreement scores. The same procedure would take place with each extraneous variable. Should one of these extraneous variables correlate positively with higher agreement scores, then further analysis is necessary to determine the effect of the independent variable, the marriage preparation instrument. Controlling length of relationship (e.g. less than one year in duration), do the couples exposed to the independent variable score higher on the scale than those not exposed to the instrument? This procedure would take place for each sub-group determined by the extraneous variable.

Another process of comparison could involve matched pairs. That is, the scores of two couples would be compared. These couples would "match" as closely as possible with respect to the extraneous variables. The significant difference between the couples would be the exposure of one couple to the independent variable. As many matches as possible could be analyzed.

Both of the above methods would determine whether the marriage preparation instrument is "causal" in producing higher agreement scores. One of the extraneous variables may be found to be more significant than the instrument in producing the desired results. Or, the marriage preparation instrument may prove effective only in conjunction with one of the extraneous variables.

The following variables are significant in this regard and data concerning them will be gathered in Part I of the questionnaire:

- respondent's age (and age of spouse)
- religious affiliation of both partners (how significant/intense)
- length of relationship before marriage
- length of engagement
- participation in a formal, marriage preparation course
    - what program and sponsored by whom
    - completion of the program
    - evaluation of the program
    - participated freely or of necessity
    - how long before marriage was the program
- level of education (for both partners)
- some indication of socio-economic status
- date of marriage (or length of living together)

The question regarding marital preparation will be included not only to acquire personal evaluation from those who participated in the marriage preparation instrument and to insure that they completed it, but also to insure that the respondents in the control group have not experienced such a program elsewhere.

The instrument which will be used to assess a couple's agreement/disagreement score will be the Family Opinion Survey created by Kirkpatrick and Hobard (1954) for their comparative study of couples in different stages of intimacy. The survey is composed of an 81 item schedule which elicits the respondent's opinion in 14 separate areas of the marital relationship.

The schedule itself is constructed as a Likert-type scale with five possible answers for each item. The answers range from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" with the numerical scores ranging from 5 - 1 respectively. There are two answer cells for each item and the respondent places the numerical value of his personal response in the first cell and places the numerical value of the response which he predicts his spouse will give in the second cell. In this way, the schedule obtains four sets of responses from each couple and allows the computation of five different scores:

1. Disagreement Score: computed from the discrepancy between the personal choices of the spouses.
2. Husband Non-empathy Score: via a comparison of paired schedules; i.e. the numerical discrepancy between response predicted for the wife and wife's actual response.
3. Wife Non-empathy Score: reverse of #2.
4. Husband Disagreement Estimate Score: discrepancy between husband's personal response and the response he predicted for his wife.
5. Wife Disagreement Estimate Score: reverse of #4.

Comparisons of the categories in the sample could be made by contrasting the mean of mean item scores of the couples in each category.

Following from the framework underlying this research, it should be noted in advance that the "non-emapthy" and "disagreement estimate" scores are just as important, if not more so, as the actual "disagreement" scores. For example, a couple may disagree on a particular point but have established a working agreement (McCall and Simmons, 1966) in which they "agree to disagree" and their behavior or activity is formulated with this in mind. Such a working agreement would be indicated by a couple's ability to empathize or estimate disagreement (Heiss, 1968: 50). For the purposes of this research, then, the estimate scores are very important as the reality which the project plans to assess is not consensus in the strict sense, that is, actual agreement, but rather consensus in the symbolic interaction sense which is more aptly described by the term "working agreement".

B. Suggested Procedures for Obtaining a Sample:

The design suggested for this research requires the utilization of a post-test with control group. The independent variable is the experience of the marriage preparation instrument developed in this thesis. Therefore, in order to conduct the research, it is necessary to randomly expose a given number of couples to the marriage preparation instrument as well as to randomly select the same number of couples to serve as a control group. It would also be preferable if the exposure of the first group to the marriage preparation instrument was conducted with as little professional involvement as possible. This preference would also dictate that such exposure not be done as part of, or in conjunction with, any other formal marriage preparation.

In order to establish some basic uniformity in the total sample, several limits could be established. For example, only those couples married for the first time, where both spouses are between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five and where the age discrepancy between the partners is three years or less, will be acceptable for the sample.

Finally, although the sample could be drawn in any number of ways, it is important to standardize the administration of the post-test to insure uniformity. So, for example, the standard could be to administer the post-test to all couples within a ten-day interval of the sixth month anniversary of their wedding.

C. Summary Comments on Model - Instrument - Research:

A conceptual model of dyadic interaction has been developed following the symbolic interaction framework. This model conceptualizes interaction as an on-going, formative process in which the interactants attempt to define the situation (self, other, "situation") and mutually arrive at a working agreement which permits organized or co-operative behavior. The processes involved in achieving a working agreement are definition/interpretation (assigning meaning) and role taking (assigning meaning as other does). The factors which become operational in the assignation of meaning have been broadly described as the respective present-past and present-future of the interactants; that is, their perspectives, attitudes, motives, expectations, etc. Interaction is formative in the sense that attitudes, perspectives, and expectations are developed in the very process of interacting. It is also cumulative in that episodes of interaction have influence on all subsequent interaction.

The marriage preparation instrument is an independent variable constructed to help engaged couples make a more functional transition to married life. Following the conceptual model, the series of exercises attempt to facilitate dyadic interaction in such a way that the processes of definition/interpretation and role taking, as well as the factors of present-past and present-future, are explicitly accentuated and made consciously operational. The primary goal of the marriage preparation instrument is to increase and develop the working agreement (congruence of definitions) in the dyadic relationship of the premarital couple.

The suggested objective evaluation is designed to assess the effectiveness of the marriage preparation instrument (independent variable) in establishing greater working agreement in the dyadic relationship. The research design is obviously concerned with longitudinal development and is hypothetically directed by the formative-cumulative nature of interaction as described by the conceptual model. Questions concerning the effectiveness of the marriage preparation instrument depend upon such objective evaluation for resolution. Similarly, the appropriateness of the conceptual model, the fit of model and dyadic relationship and the operationalization of the conceptual model by the marriage preparation instrument are factors requiring further assessment subsequent to objective evaluation.

IV. Additional Research Implication

Hypothetically, at least, the conceptual model derived from symbolic interaction theory would tend to indicate that couples enjoying a greater degree of working agreement should also possess a more satisfying marital relationship. This would flow from the possible concommitant reduction in disagreement (Heiss, 1968: 50), an increase in role taking ability (Heiss, 1968: 540), and the realization of more co-operative behavior. This latter point is even more relevant if co-operation is defined as a process concerning "the settlement of problems in terms which make possible the continuation of differences and even fundamental disagreements" (Sprey, 1969: 703). In fact, Sprey's view of co-operation is very reminiscent of the description of working agreement proposed in this thesis.

Although Miller, Corrales and Wackman (1975: 149) do not use symbolic interaction terminology, their reported research on marital satisfaction tends to support the above hypothesis.

Briefly, then, and in conclusion, if the research suggested in this thesis discovered couples with a greater degree of working agreement, it would be interesting and beneficial to pursue the sample further and assess whether greater working agreement correlates positively with greater marital satisfaction.

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APPENDIX

A Comment on Compulsory Marriage Preparation

It is appropriate to discuss compulsory marriage preparation. There is enough indication in the literature to raise a question regarding the benefit and effectiveness of such a practice.

Several church denominations require engaged couples to participate in some form of marriage preparation before they can be married by the minister of that church. This regulation flows from an awareness of the importance of marriage and the possible prevention of divorce which marriage preparation might produce. However, because of the regulatory and compulsory atmosphere created, the expected utility and effectiveness of pre-marital intervention appears to be absent for many couples. After evaluating the original Des Moines program of Pre Cana, McDonald and Nett state: "It was generally concluded that the couples were not paying much attention to course content. Most of them were completing the program simply to fulfill an obligation to their pastor. Many had very effectively closed themselves off from hearing what was said" (1973: 40). Granted, part of the problem in Des Moines was the very nature and structure of the program (McDonald and Nett, 1973: 41ff) which could be identified as a lecture series, but the evaluation reveals that the compulsory element had a detrimental effect on many couples. A similar conclusion comes from Adams (1968) who participated in a non-church related experiment dealing with pre-marital counseling of minors who were "referred" to the Family Service League by court order. The experiment proved largely unsuccessful and one of Adam's conclusions is pertinent: "Undergoing an evaluation of a marriage decision must be a voluntary act rather than court ordered (It is no crime to want to be married)" (1968: 22). On the other hand, Schonick (1975) reports on an experiment very similar to that participated in by Adams but indicates sufficient success, especially among minority groups, to warrent continuation of the program.

Schonick's report and this writer's experience dictate some moderation in reacting against compulsory marriage preparation. Many young couples are not even aware of the possibility of preparing for marriage in a structured manner. At least obligatory marriage preparation forces them to confront the reality of seriously preparing for marriage and likewise insures them of an opportunity to do so. Perhaps the answer is to soften the rigidity of the requirements as well as to make a wider variety of marriage preparation experiences and options available to the couples. The real danger in abolishing compulsory marriage preparation is that some professionals, particularly priests and ministers, may cease providing marriage preparation opportunities altogether.

At the same time, however, couples should not be forced to participate in something which they either deem worthless or against which they rebel. Of relevance here is the writer's experience in co-conducting Beginnings, a week-end program of marriage preparation in Red Deer, Alberta. Of the twenty-eight couples who have participated in the program thus far, at least fifty percent were required by their church to have some form of marriage preparation. Of these couples, only one expressed any verbal resentment and opposition. Because of their obvious lack of participation this couple became a source of concern during the week-end to the four professionals conducting the program, and interestingly enough, the only negative evaluation of the week-end program was mailed in by this couple. In short, the marriage preparation experience for this couple seems to have been a waste of time, and, it might be assumed, this negative experience was largely due to their prior, reactive attitude. The remaining couples who were required to take the course seem to have accepted the possible merit of the experience and likewise evaluated the week-end positively.

In summary, there is some merit to compulsory marriage preparation in that it forces couples to confront the reality of preparing for marriage and helps provide insurance of the availability of such opportunities especially in church parishes. However, there is need for greater variety of marriage preparation opportunities so that couples may have some choice in the matter. One possible merit of a marriage preparation instrument such as the one being constructed in this project is that it would provide couples with the opportunity of self-preparation with as little contact as possible with a professional facilitator. This use, of course, would rely heavily upon self-motivation!